New Statesman

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Collapse of the water industry

Is God a Tory?

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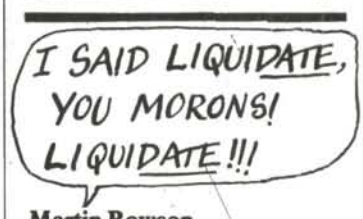

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New Statesman

Vol 105 No 2706 28 January 1983

Not a proper response

SIR KENNETH NEWMAN came to the Metropolitan Police as Commissioner with a considerable reputation for efficiency and intelligence. He knew before he came that he faced a gargantuan task. The main constituents of his problem are substantial loss of public confidence in the police; low morale and discipline within the police; and an objectively appalling level of police performance (reflected in the fact that the clear up rate for reported crime is only 17 per cent in the London area, compared to a 39 per cent average in other metropolitan centres).

He embarked at once on a major external and internal public relations campaign. This first phase culminated in the publication on Monday of the first stage of a five-year Newman plan to improve the performance and image of the Met. Reaction to the proposals has been subdued, partly because it was so ridiculously over-sold in advance – by leak and off-the-record briefing – that what eventually came out caused anti-climax. It was in no sense the 'shake-up of the Met' that we had been led to expect. But the small print of the proposals deserves the closest attention. For it bears the clear stamp of Newman himself and of his experience in Northern Ireland.

However unsatisfactory the practice, the Met is at least supposed to be under the political direction of the Home Secretary. But neither Mr Whitelaw nor Home Office officials were involved in this exercise, though it made strong social and political assumptions. The language and presentation of the plan are further evidence that the new Commissioner – like all his predecessors – in effect thinks that the Metropolitan Police is essentially responsible to itself alone.

Newman's 'interim manifesto' – as it is already being called – is seriously defective at all major levels. First the purely managerial. Its supposed purpose is decentralisation in the name of efficiency. But the actual proposals could only have come from someone who has not yet properly understood the power structures and power vacuums of the Met. The proposal to divide London into four police areas in the name of management efficiency ignores the fact that real devolved police power is already in the hands of the Commanders of London's 24 police districts. They are the existing 'Chinese warlords' of London's police system. Unless and until something is done to change their status and powers, any plans for reorganisation will not be worth much.

The confusion of the Newman devolution proposals is made worse by the fact that at the same time he is suggesting an increased, at least consultative, role for the police at borough level – where typically several boroughs come under a single district, but do not have the same boundaries.

THE MORE FUNDAMENTAL flaws in the Newman approach are, however, revealed as much by what was left out as by what was actually proposed. The initial coverage of the proposals has given the impression that the trend will now be increasingly towards decentralised and community policing. But there is in fact nothing in what has been published to support this view. Far from being abolished, or turned to new purposes, the Special Patrol Group is being retained. In practice the much vaunted new Immediate Response Units will almost certainly become 'local' SPGs. The IRU proposals, therefore, will in practice increase more than tenfold the number of London policemen organised in SPG-like units and available for service anywhere in London on SPG-like operations.

Further, the pattern of Newman's Ulster experience stands out in his emphasis on patrols and roadblocks – anti-burglary patrols, anti-rowdyism patrols, fire brigade tactics, stop-and-search operations. The titles given to these police operations may be comfortingly new. The reality is that the 'militarisation' of a great part of the Met's activity will continue to increase. Far from being part of police decentralisation, the proposals taken as a whole will increase the command capacity of Scotland Yard at the centre and give it more trained 'troops' on the ground.

The same kind of criticism applies to those parts of the Newman proposals which seem on the face of them to be accepting the arguments in favour of 'community' policing. Most people assume that community policing means having more policemen, mainly in uniform on their feet and on the beat in neighbourhoods, in touch with the communities in which they are working and which they are supposed to be serving.

But the actual phrases used by Newman are importantly different. Again drawing on his Ulster experience, Newman's view of community policing seems to be that of 'corporate policing' of society by itself as unpaid auxiliaries to the police. The phrases about liaising with the statutory and voluntary agencies, with teachers and social workers carry with them very real dangers of the rapid erosion of basic civil liberties and rights of privacy – particularly when combined with the explosion of police and other computerised data banks. Community policing is not the same thing as police penetration of the community. It is a distinction that Newman neither draws, nor seems to be aware of.

This gap in the proposals leads directly to their central failure. If policing is to work in a modern and democratic society, the police must be in tune with the politics of the society they serve and must have and maintain the confidence and respect of those being policed. The Newman plan admits clearly that these essential requirements do not exist in London today. But it then makes no suggestion as to how this social calamity should effectively be tackled. The inescapable conclusion is that the Met – in whole, or split – must be made accountable to local politics. No power in the state can be allowed to operate without proper external accountability. This applies with the greatest force to the police. But in Newman there is no serious discussion of accountability. The plan talks of liaison but not of accountability. Liaison, of course, has its place in policing, as in most activity. But to suppose that it alone will make a major contribution to the problem that is staring London in the face is to show that the problem itself has not been understood. Newman is a managerial not a political response – and not a very good one at that. □

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Tories wage secret war on peace campaigners

MORE THAN a dozen organisations campaigning against CND and the peace movement have come together in a loose but co-ordinated coalition, intended to arrange for separate Conservative, government, or other organisations to attack CND on different fronts.

Co-ordinating groups at three different levels have been set up, each chaired by a leading Conservative politician. One of the groups, about which few details have come to light, is chaired by the Prime Minister herself. Another operation was mounted from John Nott's private office at the MoD. Most have been operating since last spring.

One of the groups taking a leading part in the campaign, the Coalition for Peace through Security (CPS), is pursuing objectives which are independent of and rather different from those of the other organisations taking part. The explicit aim of CPS is to introduce to the British political scene in general, and the New Right in particular, the manipulative campaigning techniques which were used to win the US presidential election for Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Earlier this month, CPS was able to capitalise on the credibility it had won on the Right by getting Conservative party chairman Cecil Parkinson to hand over to it the critical nationwide list of all party agents. This will enable CPS and an associated network of New Right groups to mail propaganda to and seek funds directly from, thousands of right-wing activists.

The plum for CPS and the New Right – with whom the desire to build up lists for 'direct mail' campaigning verges almost on the fanatical – is the new ICL computer system which has been installed in the last three months at Conservative Central Office. It already contains the names of most of the party membership, and new lists of professional and other groups who might be potential Tory voters are continually being added. The Conservative computer, the gift of an anonymous industrial supporter, is itself an indication of how far the US New Right's espousal of direct mailing and similar techniques has entered the British party's dogma.

A new Committee for Peace with Freedom' was set up last spring to be the co-ordinating centre of the offensive against CND. The Committee is chaired by Winston Churchill MP, and meets roughly once a month at his London flat in Westminster. The latest meeting was held on Tuesday evening this week. The meetings are usually attended by a core group of Churchill, Edward Leigh and Julian Lewis of CPS, Group Captain David Bolton of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Ken Aldred of the British Atlantic Committee, Mark Frisk of the Federation of Conservative Students, Bill Walker MP, Lord Chalfont (Council for Arms Control) and a secretariat from party HQ.

Churchill acknowledges the existence of the group, and describes it as 'a co-ordinating group where those who are involved in putting over the multilateralist case can get together and discuss their plans'. Asked recently whether the 'plans' discussed included the recent illegal low-flying banner towed over the Greenham Common womens' demonstration (by CPS), he said 'If people want to fly kites, why not?'

The Committee's one, and so far only, public activity demonstrated the extraordinary range and number of the groups involved in the anti-CND campaign. The Committee prepared a 'Petition of Welcome' for the visit of President Reagan last summer. Their next proposal is to hold a major rally in London in May, at which Conservative youth will be urged to turn out to demonstrate their support for 'balanced' disarmament. The CPS will play an important role, as it did in the Reagan petition.

The CPS's literature and printing programmes, which Churchill acknowledges to be 'gigantic', are backed by the US Heritage Foundation. Churchill apparently wants to couple this financial backing to the Tories' developing distribution system – which will immediately accomplish the New Right groups' aim of infiltrating and penetrating, and ultimately capturing, the Tories' grass roots organisation.

For the Reagan petition, the Committee gave its address as 37 Charles Street, W1. This is Dartmouth House, the headquarters of the English Speaking Union, whose chairman, the former Labour MP Alan Lee Williams, is a prominent member of all the 'Atlanticist' organisations.

The petition was circulated by the British Atlantic Committee, which now receives more than £40,000 a year for its Regional Information Service programme from the Foreign Office. Most of the 18,000 signatures alleged to have been gathered were put together by Conservative students, under the umbrella of 'British Atlantic Youth', and the Conservative students' own 'Youth for Multilateral Disarmament'. The crest on the petition, and the printers, were those of the Coalition for Peace through Security.

Another secret group meets every fortnight in the House of Commons with Peter Blaker MP, the Minister of State for defence. These meetings are staffed by Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence officials who are supporting the ministerial campaign against CND and the peace movement.

The most recent meeting in Blaker's House of Commons office was held last week. It therefore preceded by a week the similar gathering in Churchill's London flat, which can – unlike the Blaker meetings – include more overt discussion of ideas which the government itself would wish to keep at arm's length. Nevertheless, Churchill himself has the official party title of 'Co-ordinator for Multilateral Disarmament and Defence'.

Blaker's meetings, which have hitherto been secret (and, unlike the Committee for Peace with Freedom, lack a cover title), are concerned with co-ordinating government and unofficial initiatives. A recent meeting decided, for example, that the attack on the recent 'Church and the Bomb' report, and the lobbying of the General Synod of the Church of England, should be the specific task of the Royal United Services Institute team, supported by the British Atlantic Committee. Another meeting discussed how and whether government or Ministry of Defence funds might be made available to the anti-CND groups.

The third and most secret organisation working against CND and the disarmament movement is a top level group of Cabinet ministers and experts from within the Conservative Party and elsewhere. It has met intermittently under Mrs Thatcher's direction.

Duncan Campbell

Who's who in the anti-CND front

British Atlantic Committee (BAC) is the major organisation providing speakers' panels and other services to the anti-CND campaign. It has recently been investigated by the Charities Commission for its overtly political campaigning, and has been forced to divide into two parts, one holding the activities which are 'impermissible' for a charity. About 2,000 members. Vice-president, Denis Healey.

British Atlantic Youth (BAY), based in Birmingham, is BAC's youth wing. Very small real membership, *not* confined to youth. Almost entirely funded directly by NATO from Brussels, unlike BAC.

Youth for Multilateral Disarmament. Association of the Federation of Conservative Students, originally planned to be a covert operation. Produces stickers: *'Cruise on!'*, etc.

English Speaking Union. Director-General is Alan Lee Williams. The original Atlanticist cultural organisation, now threatening its own status as a 'registered educational charity' by distributing political campaign literature.

Committee for Peace with Freedom (CPF): Co-ordinating group of major anti-CND organisations, chaired by Winston Churchill MP. Meets monthly at his London flat to discuss non-governmental initiatives against the peace movement.

Blaker and Thatcher political co-ordination committees. Meetings, respectively, fortnightly and about quarterly, to bring ministers and civil servants together with Tory and other anti-CND outsiders.

Council for Arms Control (CAC). *Was set up in 1981 by Alan Lee* Williams and Ray Whitney, the conservative MP who previously directed the Foreign Office's secret propaganda operation, the 'Information Research Department.'

Coalition for Peace through Security (CPS). The nastiest of a spectrum of 'new right' organisations, including the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Centre for Policy Studies (also CPS). Key figure is now Dr Julian Lewis, with Conservative activists Tony Kerpel and Edward Leigh.

Campaign for Defence and Multilateral Disarmament (CDMD) is the Conservative Party's internal organisation for distributing anti-CND material, run from Tory Central Office and directed by Winston Churchill.

***Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding* (LCTU).** Offshoot of BAC, intended to propagandise on behalf of NATO within the labour movement. Its major operation has been the:

Labour and Trade Union Press Service (LTUPS). Wholly NATO-funded (until recently, about £6,000 p.a.), free press service to union newspapers and elsewhere. Key officials: Roy Mason, Terry Duffy, Frank Chapple. Also includes Roy Hattersley, Bill Sirs, David Owen and Bill Rodgers.

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Railway cuts will come after general election

AFTER THE publication of the Serpell Report last week the government now seems certain to make large-scale rail cuts – but only after the next general election. The government's strategy of procrastination was made clear this week by transport secretary David Howell, both in his public pronouncements and in a private exchange of messages with other ministers.

In Parliament, Howell repeated the oft-made statement that there would be no substantial closures. But for the first time he added a significant rider: 'If there were any change in that policy it would only be taken after a long and informed debate.' He repeated his statement *and the rider* no fewer than four times.

Moreover, on the *Panorama* programme this week Howell refused to rule out any of the Serpell options, including the notorious Option A. This option, as exclusively revealed in the *NS* three weeks ago, would reduce the railway network from 11,000 miles to 1,600 miles.

Howell's intentions became clear in a note which he sent to fellow cabinet ministers together with his draft statement on Serpell for the House of Commons. The note was apparently 'poisonous' about British Rail. Howell said that BR had sabotaged any constructive debate on Serpell by its orchestrated leaks, and accused BR of monstrous incompetence and inefficiency.

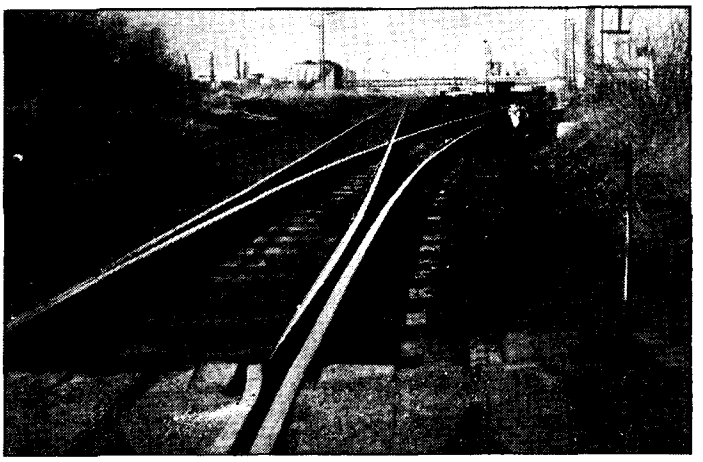
Howell added that cuts would have to be shelved but that an opportunity would come later with a new British Rail chairman.

Sir Peter Parker's contract expires in September, and despite his denials it is likely that he would have stayed on at BR if he had been pressed.

In reply to Howell's note, Leon Brittan, first secretary at the Treasury, said it would be a tragedy if this chance of making savings were lost. The argument must be kept alive, he said.

However, George Younger, the Scottish secretary, said in a note to Howell that he did not want any closures in Scotland. This illustrates the divisions that exist on the subject even within the cabinet, and are likely to be reflected on the backbenches. If Option A were implemented nearly 200 Tory MPs would lose their railway services.

Mick Hamer



Empty tracks: is this the future for British Rail?

MSC plans to exclude unions

PROJECTS on the controversial new Community Programme may be allowed to go ahead without local union approval, according to a high-level document produced by the Manpower Services Commission – even though the MSC has given public assurances that none of the 130,000 places will be filled without the consent of the relevant trade union.

The £574 million scheme was launched in October and provides temporary, mainly part-time work for the long-term unemployed, paying an average of £60 a week. Critics fear that it will be used to substitute for public sector jobs and to undermine general wage levels. (See *NS* 19 November 1982.)

The MSC paper, circulated to senior managers in the Employment Service (which administers adult MSC programmes), notes the need to beat off 'political opposition' to the Programme. Unions who oppose the scheme for reasons considered outside 'TUC guidance' may be overruled by the MSC Area Board – or by a higher authority if 'the composition of the Board may be such that it would not be judged helpful to seek their views'. As local trade unionists serve on these boards, this is clearly an attempt to exclude them entirely.

The MSC's private attitude is in marked contrast to its public posture, as expressed in a recent handbook used for selling the scheme to potential sponsors: 'We don't want substitution either. This is one of the reasons we require sponsors to get the agreement of the appropriate union. There are also trade union representatives on the Area Board which oversees the Programme.'

On hearing about the new MSC paper, Tom Sawyer, deputy general secretary of NUPE, warned that if unions were not given enough say locally 'we would have to review our position nationally'.

The MSC is now desperate to fill the 130,000 places on its Programme. After six weeks of operation and a £600,000 promotion campaign by Saatchi and Saatchi, only 200 places were actually running.

Donald Hirsch

MISCELLANY

No pain, no jobs

Italian drug manufacturers Farmitalia Carlo Erba Ltd are not favourites for this column's prize for the worst promotion campaign of 1983. In a bid to push a new anti-arthritis drug, Flosint, they are inviting various doctors on Merseyside to 'step aboard Henry Ford's motor yacht . . . instantly you're back in the luxurious air-conditioned, wood-panelled world of the '30s'. In a month when Fords have announced 1,300 redundancies in their Halewood plant, founding father Henry Ford is not a great folk hero on Merseyside. Nor are local trade unionists impressed by the drug company's description of the Hungry Thirties as 'that protected period between two world wars when, for some people at least, life passed agreeably enough'. Meanwhile the slogan being used to promote the drug sounds suspiciously like one of Norman Tebbit's catchphrases. It is: 'Towards Mobility Without Pain'.

Mind how you go

Openly gay male delegates to the National Union of Teachers' conference in Jersey this Easter face the alarming prospect of being threatened with legal proceedings. The 1967 Act which partially decriminalised male homosexuality in Britain does not apply in the Channel Islands. Yet the NUT executive has refused to change the venue,

even after seeking a legal opinion on the practical implications of the law as long ago as August 1981, which advised that 'any overt act of homosexuality would be pursued and charges brought.' As the London Gay Teachers Group points out, an 'overt act' could include any public demonstration of affection. The Group is angry that the executive went ahead with its plans in the clear knowledge that it would be putting gay delegates in serious jeopardy of criminal proceedings.

Peace off

Peace campaigners in Hillingdon, west London, have been refused permission to set up a CND information stall in the Uxbridge shopping precinct, because the Tory-controlled local council thinks that it might cause a breach of the peace. The Hillingdon CND members had already run the stall for four months before they realised that they needed a licence. Councillor Ken Guy, chairman of the works committee, rejected the application because 'it is council policy to keep controversial issues out of the High Street. We consider CND's stall to be a controversial subject and potentially likely to cause a breach of the peace.' The council's decision is presumably what defence experts would call a zero option.

Misfiring

Nearly three years after being arrested on suspicion of involvement in the long-running campaign of arson against second homes in Wales, Huw Lawrence, a 40-year-old Aberystwyth college lecturer, was last week awarded £600 damages against Dyfed/Powys police. A Swansea jury found that he had been held for an unreasonable length of time – more than 20 hours – before being released without charge. The police were ordered to pay costs of over £25,000. Lawrence, who has no criminal record, was one of 39 people picked up in raids throughout Wales in March 1980. By that time there had been 25 reported attacks on second homes; only four men were later convicted of just two arson attempts. Since then, more than 40 other arsons have been logged, but most have not been solved.

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Scotland Yard snoopers question Tamil woman

LAST THURSDAY afternoon, Rajeshwari Balasubramanium was about to leave her North London flat to go to the doctor when she was confronted by two men looking for 'Sister Rajesh'. When Rajesh identified herself, the men explained that they were George Wild and Stuart Jones from New Scotland Yard, and that they had come for 'a friendly chat'.

The cause of their visit was a picket which Rajesh had helped to organise the previous Saturday outside the Ceylon Tea Centre in Piccadilly Circus. The picket, which was entirely peaceful, was a protest at the detention of Ms Nirmala Nithyananthan, a well-known Tamil writer and dramatist, who has been held without trial at the Guru Nagar army camp in Sri Lanka since 18 November 1982. There are no female guards at the camp, and friends and relations have been refused access to Nirmala.

Messrs Wild and Jones told Rajesh that they wanted to find out whether she intended to organise any more pickets, because they wanted to know how many police they should allocate to the next one. When Rajesh replied that she had not thought of arranging any future pickets, she was asked further questions: who was Nirmala and why had Rajesh organised a picket for her?

Rajesh told the men from the Yard that she, like Nirmala, was a writer and a woman, and she wanted to protest at human rights violations by the Sri Lankan government.

However, the police wanted to know more, even though Rajesh had explained that she had a heavy dose of 'flu and would prefer them to leave. How did she get the time to write while looking after three children and doing a full-time job? Which groups were involved in these protests? Did she know a particular man who had recently been deported from India?

Sri Lankans living in Britain are understandably suspicious of this kind of questioning. Some are convinced that the Sri Lankan police work in close collaboration with their British counterparts. A number of students who have returned from London to Sri Lanka in recent years have been arrested at Colombo airport and shown recent photographs of themselves which had obviously been taken in London without their knowledge.

When the *New Statesman* rang Mr Jones at Scotland Yard, to ask him about the purpose of his visit to Rajesh, he replied: 'I would think it's a matter of public order, wouldn't you?' When we pointed out that the picket outside the Ceylon Tea Centre had been wholly orderly, he agreed, but declined to answer any more questions.

Eventually, the press bureau at Scotland Yard issued us with a statement which said that the questioning of Rajesh had been 'in the course of a general inquiry aimed at assisting the police to cover any future demonstration by her group – it was purely routine'.

Upali Cooray

Britain's poor earn £10 a year

INCOME inequalities in Britain have widened over the past five years, according to an analysis in the latest issue of *Economic Trends* (HMSO £9.75). After taking taxes and benefits into account, the poorest 20 per cent of households earned just 7.1 per cent of the national income, a fall from 7.3 per cent in 1977 (although a rise on the 1980 figure of 6.9 per cent). The final income of the richest 20 per cent of households stood at 37.9 per cent in 1979, and this rose to 38.5 per cent in 1981.

This is not the only ammunition for the Left in the report. Despite the failings of our tax and benefit system, *Economic Trends* does show how important the welfare state is to those at the bottom of the pile. In 1981, the non-welfare state income going to the poorest 10 per cent of the population stood, on average, at just £10 a year – and that's not a misprint. After cash and benefits in kind had been paid, and indirect taxes deducted, the average income of the lowest decile rose to £3,040 – low enough, perhaps, but £3,030 greater than what the market allocated.

Economic Trends also shows the impact of direct and indirect taxation under the Thatcher government. The richest 20 per cent of households paid 2.3 per cent less in direct taxation in 1981 than they did in 1977. There was also a 'small reduction in tax for many lower income groups', but this change will have been wiped out by the 1981 budget.

More important are the changes in indirect taxes. In May 1979 the *New Statesman* reported on a confidential minute prepared by the DHSS which argued against increasing VAT, because of its discriminating effect on the poor. The fear expressed then has been fulfilled. In 1981, for example, the lowest quintile group of two adults with two children paid 5 per cent more of their disposable income in indirect tax than they did in 1977 or 1979.

The *Economic Trends* survey is incomplete, because it excludes much of the government's income and expenditure. What research there has been shows that once these non-allocated sums are put into the analysis (they include items such as roads, police and museums), inequalities between rich and poor, and between those with children and the childless, increase still further.

Frank Field

Will Tebbit become Britain's ugliest export?

BRITISH trade unions are becoming increasingly worried that Norman Tebbit's union legislation will help to suppress workers' struggles overseas, and will erode international law designed to protect basic trade union rights.

It is common practice for Third World governments – particularly in former UK colonies – to write British labour relations laws into their own statute books. Past examples include the wholesale transfer of Ted Heath's Industrial Relations Act to Ghana.

The current fear is that Tebbit's law forbidding disputes which are not 'wholly or mainly' between employers and employees will be exported into countries where democracy has perished and where workers feel impelled to take strike action in order to obtain basic social rights. Regimes in such countries may now argue that laws which are acceptable for the UK – home of the trade union movement – are all right for them too.

The ASEAN group of countries may be particularly tempted to take this line. For some time they have been threatening virtually to wipe out union rights, arguing that the International Labour Organisation's conventions on union freedoms are unsuitable for developing countries (by which they mean that such conventions might frighten away multinational companies).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is now vigorously proposing the idea that the Tories' union laws, and Tebbit's proposals for further 'reform', violate ILO conventions which have been ratified by the British government. It argues, for example, that to prohibit political action by trade unions is incompatible with Convention 87.

The same convention also states that 'workers' organisations should have the right to draw up their constitutions without interference by the public authorities'. The Tories' proposals for regulating union elections seem to be a clear breach of this rule.

Whether anything can be done about these violations is another matter. When a country agrees to ratify ILO conventions, the presumption is that it will write them into its constitution, making them legally binding. In Britain, however, there is no constitution into which they could be written, and trade union procedure remains based on custom and practice.

The difficulties caused by this are illustrated by the present predicament of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITWF). In a move that surprised even the CBI and the hard-nosed Institute of Directors, Tebbit introduced a clause into his 1982 legislation which allowed employers to ban international action by unions. This was the result of heavy lobbying by international shipping bosses, who wanted to stop the ITWF's campaigns on behalf of Third World sailors on 'flag of convenience' ships.

Tebbit's law was obviously against the spirit of ILO Convention 87, which allows trade unions to join international organisations of their own choosing. However, according to the ITWF's general secretary, Harold Lewis, 'our lawyers concluded that there was nothing they could do until the UK adopted a Bill of Rights allowing for trade union and other basic freedoms'.

The possible knock-on effect of Tebbit's legislation into the Third World could help British unions attract support from human rights groups and churches in a campaign agains the Tories' laws. It was at a 1981 Commonwealth Trade Union Council conference that Third World unionists were first heard to warn that they might be caught by British 'union-busting' laws. Although the CTUC's headquarters is located inside Congress House in London, the TUC – as is usual with international labour issues – failed to publicise this, and has remained silent over the question of the ILO Conventions. This Friday the TUC hosts a major conference on multinational companies; it remains to be seen whether it can make amends on both counts.

Don Thomson

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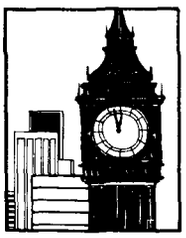

PATRICK WINTOUR

Who pays the piper calls the tune

MR TEBBIT, it seems, is driven by two obsessions. The first is that no trade-union leader is, by definition, representative of his members; the second that no one willingly gives money to the Labour Party. In his eagerness to combine these obsessions into one all-embracing view, Mr Tebbit has decided that trade union officials deliberately make it difficult for union members to contract out of paying the political levy. Unable to find any evidence to feed this prejudice, Mr Tebbit, in his Green Paper, has simply fixed the figures (a trick he learnt with unemployment statistics).

Alighting on the example of the National Union of Mineworkers, he points out: 'There are wide variations – between 36 and 100 per cent – in the proportions of members paying the levy in different areas of the NUM with their own political funds.' This fact is the centre-piece in Mr Tebbit's case that 'the most likely cause' of the disparities between unions, in the numbers contracting out, cannot be choice or indifference, but 'the difficulties placed in the way of the individual member who wishes to contract out.' To thrust home this point, Mr Tebbit has even published a table showing that every miner in the North Wales NUM pays the levy while only 37.2 per cent of Durham and 36.3 per cent of Northumberland miners pay up.

On the face of it, this picture of wildly political miners in North Wales and distinctly apolitical miners further north looks pretty fishy – which is just how Mr Tebbit intended it to look. But, as I said earlier, he has fixed the figure. The reason why only 37 per cent of the Durham NUM pay the levy is because the *total* NUM area membership consists of all those entitled to death benefits – not only the 15,078 full-dues-paying members, but 25,065 others, including retired members, unemployed, members' widows and permanently sick. Only the 15,078 are eligible to pay the levy and 99 per cent of them do so, making the figures just the same as those for the other mining unions referred to in the Green Paper. Similarly, far from it being only 36.3 per cent of Northumberland miners who pay the levy (as the Green Paper claims) only eight of the 6,285 eligible miners do *not* do so.

The point of this exercise is not to argue that all is well with political funds,* but to show how shifty and unreliable are the Green Paper and its author. In fact, the most interesting thing about the Green Paper is not what it says but what it leaves out. There is no call for the election of director generals of employers associations. There is no call to break up the oligarchies that run employers organisations. There is no outcry over the practice of not voting. Union democracy may indeed be flawed, but at least unions try.

Tebbit's one-sidedness is most apparent in his treatment of the financial links between unions and the Labour Party. Here, Tebbit lays himself open to trouble, by offering some principles. These are:

> No trade union member should be obliged to support financially any political organisation if he does not want to do so. It is objectionable in principle that anyone should have to indicate his dissent from the political alignment of his union to political activity or to a political party to which they are opposed. It is wrong in principle that a decision to contribute to a political fund should result from inertia or apathy rather than from a deliberate and positive choice.

Presumably, these self-evident principles, being principles, are applicable to the politics of companies. That being so, I have rewritten the paragraph above, maintaining the principle but changing the context.

> It is wrong in principle that a decision by management directors to contribute large sums of company revenue to the Conservative Party should result from inertia or non-attendance at an AGM by institutional shareholders rather than from a deliberate and positive choice.

And yet, of course, this is precisely what happens. Over a million pounds are given to the Tory Party every year, on the nod. No means exist for the individual shareholder to contract out of this process (apart, of course, from disinvestment from the company).

It is anyway not easy to find out who does give the money to the Tories. The Party declines to reveal a central list of who funds it, but prints only the donations given to Conservative Central Office by individual constituencies. This is unlike the Labour Party, which annually prints trade union affiliations to the Labour Party and the cost of affiliation. Central Office explains: 'It's always been the case that any donations are private . . . anyway it's all in the company accounts which anyone can look through.' This is, in a sense, correct. The 1967 Companies Act says that the donations which must be declared are

> a donation or subscription to a political party or to a person who to its knowledge can reasonably be regarded as likely to effect public support for such a political party.

Every year, the union-funded Labour Research Department does look through the accounts of the top 2,000 companies out of the million and a half registered companies. LRD points out that there is no means of knowing how many small companies also donate to the Tories. Moreover, many companies use loopholes to disguise their political donations.

Other companies that support the Conservative Party launder money through an organisation called British United Industrialists. BUI does not welcome publicity. As an unincorporated association it does not have to reveal where it spends its money. The current director, Captain Briggs, refuses to say what BUI does other than that it helps organisations and individuals that promote free enterprise. It has been calculated that it received over £300,000 from British companies in 1981. Much of that will have gone to the Conservative Party.

Last August, Labour Research asked BUI's biggest backer, Allied Breweries, where the £70,000 they gave BUI finally ended up. On behalf of the Allied Breweries Secretariat, Mr Marquis refused to tell Labour Research, but promised 'if any shareholder wants to know they only have to ask and they will be provided with the information.' Accordingly, the West Midlands Pension Fund which invests in Allied Breweries asked Mr Marquis where the money Allied Breweries gave to BUI finally went. Mr Marquis was not in expansive mood. He replied, in August: 'We are satisfied that the money donated to BUI will be applied in accordance with BUI's objectives to support bodies which support the cause of free enterprise.' Marquis referred the West Midlands Pension Fund to BUI for any other inquiries.

In December the Tories refused legislation to require unincorporated associations to reveal the source and destination of their political donations.

In theory, the funds of employers' organisations are under the same political restraints as the unions and have to comply with the 1913 Trade Union Act. In fact, only two employers' organisations have political funds and between them they spent just £400 in 1980. The reason for this is twofold. Many employers' organisations are incorporated associations and thus come under the terms of the Companies Act. Secondly, those employers that are not incorporated are not greatly hindered by the 1913 Act. That Act defines political activity pretty narrowly as the funding of political parties. Thus employers can fund campaigns against nationalisation and such like out of general funds without fear of state intervention. □

Peter Kellner is on holiday.

**Trade Unions, the Labour Party and the law*, K. D. Ewing, Edinburgh University Press. An excellent account.

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The Tory Party at prayer

In this second article Raphael Samuel analyses the rupture between Thatcherism and the Church of England in the context of the historical relationship between the party and the established church

> The Conservative Party has decided to combat the progress of left-wing views in the Church by holding a conference to put the case for Conservative Christianity. The conference, which is being organised by officials at Conservative Central Office and a group of MPs of all denominations, will take place next week . . . . The organisers say the timing of the conference just before the discussion of a church report advocating unilateral disarmament, is 'a happy coincidence'. Mrs Thatcher knows of the conference and is said to 'thoroughly approve' . . . Mr Mervyn Kohler, an assistant director at central office, said: 'We want people to wake up to the fact that there are Christians in the Conservative Party.
>
> *Observer*, 23.1.83

IT IS SOME MEASURE of the weakening hold of the Conservative Party on one of its traditional components, Anglicanism, that Central Office is now reduced, rather in the manner of the Communist Party or the Militant Tendency, to holding a fraction meeting in preparation for the Church of England's general synod next month; and that threatening sounds of disestablishment are now coming from the Right rather than, as in the 19th and early 20th centuries, from the dissenting and radical Left.

All this, from the point of veiw of a historian, is startling. 'Throne and altar' was the original Tory rallying cry in the reign of Queen Anne, and the mobilisation of 'Church and King' mobs in the 1790s (in Birmingham they sacked the houses of the dissenting intelligentsia, in Lancashire they burnt effigies of Tom Paine) was perhaps the earliest experiment in Tory democracy. 'Church defence' was the one unifying theme of Conservative policy in the 19th century, and the 'hereditary alliance' with the Church, as T. E. Kebbel put it in 1886, 'one of the chief titles of the Tory Party to the confidence of the English people'. For a politician like Lord Salisbury, whose name graces the theoretical journal of today's New Right (the first issue has an article by a Cambridge don arguing that West Indians are 'structurally' unfitted to be British), religion was (as Paul Smith tells us) 'the main sheet anchor of his mind', the Church of England (as he declares) 'the main beam' of 'the ancient fabric of constitution' and Church defence 'the dearest matter upon the whole field of political controversy'.

It provided him with a touchstone not only on matters of high politics but also on manners and morals. He disliked the godless Jowett at Balliol as much as he feared a 'wave of infidelity' sweeping over the land, and opposed university education for women not only out of fear of them 'suffering permanently in health' ('in consequence of attempting to study at an age when men can safely do it and they cannot'), but also on the grounds that (as he had been told), 'young ladies . . . instead of going to Church . . . assemble on Sunday mornings at the rooms of a free-thinking Don, and . . . discuss all conceivable forms of unbelief'. (On the other side of the political divide, it was Nonconformity more than any other interest or issue which held the Liberal ranks together, as in later years it was to be the cement of the Liberal-Labour alliance.)

These historical associations were not forgotten when Mrs Thatcher assumed the Conservative Party leadership. In an early address she reminded members that it had originated as a Church Party, and the appeal to religion could be said to be an unspoken premise in her pleas for a return to 'traditional' values. Christian doctrine still finds occasional echoes in Conservative platform rhetoric (Nigel Lawson, as Energy Secretary, has suggested that the discovery of North Sea oil was a 'divine providence'), and it can also be found in those Augustinian reflections on man's innate depravity with which, it seems, in the still watches of the night, the more philosophically inclined Conservatives are apt to console themselves.

As the otherwise cheerful Mr Lawson put it in a recent pamphlet ' . . . Conservatism is founded on the basic acceptance of the ineradicable imperfection of human nature'. Dr Edward Norman, the high priest of Thatcherite theology (though he is not a theologian but a historian), put it more severely, ' . . . What is permanent in human nature is . . . moral frailty and . . . the universal incidence of sin'.

In the Tory psyche, however, there has been a simmering anger against the Church, which – like the analogous feeling against the BBC – came to the boil with the Falklands war. Hostility to the Church has, it seems, become the standard form among delegates at Tory Party conferences. Last October carping references to the Church received an eager hearing.

A crescendo of rage was registered at the time of the Falklands Thanksgiving Service when the Archbishop of Canterbury coura-

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geously refused to recognise that God was British. Sir John Biggs-Davison spoke of 'cringing clergy' who were 'misusing' St Paul's to call the war in question; Julian Amery MP – the son of a well-known imperialist – complained of the absence of martial hymns; the Prime Minister was variously reported as 'hopping mad' or 'spitting blood' at the insult to national honour. A new wave of indignation followed the Church working party's report on nuclear disarmament. The *Sunday Telegraph* editorialist raised the spectre of secession:

> The Church of England would be very wrong . . . to accept the report of its working party on defence policy, which in effect condemns nuclear deterrence as unchristian. It would be wrong to do so, in the first place because such a conclusion is grossly to oversimplify the ethical and moral problems involved . . . But, more important, it would be wrong to do so because many of its faithful would be so scandalised by such a decision as to be forced out of the Church.

The discomfort now attending the Conservative Party's relations with the Church is in striking contrast to the inter-war years. Then, government took the Church seriously as the major symbolic expression of national unity, while the Church saw itself as keeper of the nation's conscience. A leading minister, like Sir Edward Wood (later Lord Halifax), could be regarded as being as active a churchman as he was a politician. The bishops, for their part, did not hesitate to put themselves in the limelight: their representations were tolerated, even if their advice was not followed, when they intervened against government policy during the General Strike, and later against cuts in the dole. High Church socialism and 'social' Christianity, in its flourishing sub-varieties, enjoyed a substantial following; William Temple – later Archbishop of Canterbury – was a widely admired leader and the massive COPEC conference he organised in 1924, though strongly radical and even anti-capitalist, excited none of the alarums which Conservatives are directing today against the Church of England Board for Social Responsibility (the very name seems to be enough to send shivers down a Thatcherite spine).

THE RECENT OUTBREAK of hostilities may have to do with the relative values which Conservatives attach to the issues at stake (industrial questions are in the end negotiable: war is sacred), but it seems more likely to be due to metabolic changes both within the Conservative Party and the Church. Speculatively one could point to the degentrification of the Party, both at parliamentary and constituency level, and the decline in deference to every species of authority, except that of Party leader: the cloth no more commands an automatic reverence than does a university education or a 'blue chip' voice.

More tangible, would be the changes in the means of persuasion. Whereas for Disraeli the Church was 'the best, if not the only agency, for evangelising the masses', today's Tory leaders have got far more mileage out of nursing the *Sun*. In the field of public order, there seems to have been a comparably seismic change. Whereas, in the 19th century, education and religion were the grand specifics for social disturbance, today more faith seems to be placed in the police (readers will recall that Mrs Thatcher's first act on taking office was to increase police pay). The symbolic space which the police occupy in the contemporary Conservative imagination can be gauged by the rapturous applause at Party conferences when any proposal is made to increase police numbers or strengthen police powers.

Within the Church the metabolic changes, if less immediately visible, may be more profound. Here too one could point to a process of degentrification, following, in some sort, the fall in the value of church livings, or the decline in the proportion of Oxford-educated ordinands – a process whose remote origins can be traced back to the Great Depression of the 1870s and 1880s. (It is remarkable how quickly the English gentleman lost interest in the Church when the money went out of it.)

Or one could refer to 'South Bank theology' and the questioning of established orthodoxies and received social identities in the cultural revolution of the 1960s. A more momentous change however, and a more radicalising one was surely the internationalisation of the Church, as a result of the ecumenical movement, the growth of the black churches in Africa, and the way in which – at a decisive moment of choice – the churches in the metropolitan countries began to take their lead from those in the Third World. It occurred in precisely the epoch when the overseas preoccupations of the Conservatives were limited to the fate of their 'kith and kin' in white Rhodesia, and its disturbing effect on the Conservative psyche can perhaps be gauged by the attacks directed against the World Council of Churches in Dr Norman's Reith lectures. In the same period, the 'new wave' charities, such as Oxfam, brought the condition of the Third World to the heart of Christian consciousness, while domestically, the Conservative Party's long flirtation with racist sentiment, inaugurated by Peter Griffiths' by-election victory at Smethwick in 1964, brought its rank and file into increasing dissensus with Church teachings. Whereas the professions and the media were liberalised in the Sixties, the churches seemed to have been seriously radicalised, and to judge by the strength of Christian opposition to the Falklands war, and of support for CND, the movement of opinion and loyalties was both more distinctive and more enduring than elsewhere.

The Tory attack on the Church forms part of a wider discourse which opposes hard-nosed 'realism' to high-minded 'do-gooding', and which looks on any public interference in the private sphere as both economically wasteful and morally debilitating. It goes with a sniggering contempt for 'namby-pamby' teaching in the class-room, judges who are 'soft' on criminals, 'bleeding heart' liberals who hawk their consciences to the world. As a political commentator remarked in July 1982, ' . . . if you want the quickest route to the heart of the Conservative party conference, make a cheap joke about the Commission for Racial Equality' (*Sunday Times*, 11 July 1982). The anger is directed less at Labour than at the *via media* of the liberal and social democratic consensus and more specifically at what Arthur Marwick has recently (and aptly) described as the 'secular Anglicanism' which has dominated the post-war welfare state. Paul Johnson, an erstwhile Wilsonian moderniser now turned salon traditionalist, gave characteristically forceful expression to this kind of feeling in an article in last Saturday's *Daily Telegraph:*

> One of the great interpretive problems of 20th-century history is the analysis of the substitutes which the high-minded have found for a vanished religious faith. All that human need to believe has to go somewhere . . . A century ago Ken Livingstone would have been a Low Church clergyman, a cunning, scheming Rev. Obadiah Slope, getting his clutches on the Chapter . . . In Victorian times most members of the ecological lobby . . . would have been filled with a more conventional missionary spirit. They would have been hard at work in Africa or the Pacific, forcing perfectly decent naked savages to wear ill-becoming cotton dresses and trousers, to cohabit solely within the bonds of matrimonial monogamy and to make love in what the French still call 'the missionary position . . . ' The missionaries were backed up by gunboats. The ecologists have Unesco and the media . . . A hundred years ago, the natives occasionally hit back and popped a missionary in the pot. Today alas there's not much chance of an ecologist being eaten.

His historical analogy with the missionaries seems close to the mark, and he would no doubt take it as supporting the 'Conservative Christian' conference – his absent adversary is indeed a missionary's son, E. P. Thompson. But the verbal violence of the passage – and the distinct ambivalence about conjugal fidelity – may suggest something of the unease which contemporary Conservatives feel at the spectre or shadow of their forbears.

Mrs Thatcher, too, seems to experience peculiar discomfort at the notion of 'do-gooding'. She belongs to a whole new breed of first-generation Tories who make a positive virtue of the absence of social conscience. West Indian immigrants are not to them, as they might be to the historically minded, descendants of those who survived the Middle Passage, but rather an alien stock who threaten, in Mrs Thatcher's word, to 'swamp' us, whoever 'us' may be. Those who are in receipt of public assistance are liable to be 'wastrels' or 'no goods' living off the welfare state. The unemployed are those who lack initiative. As one of Mrs Thatcher's admirers, Mr Biffen, put it: 'There are no Stockton-on-Tees skeletons in the Grantham cupboard'. (The reference is to Mr Macmillan's constituency whose 1930s sufferings are said to have impelled him towards support for state intervention.) What Mrs Thatcher has called 'bourgeois guilt' – 'that sense of . . . self-criticism which affects those . . . who cling to a relatively comfortable life while feeling a troublesome pang of conscience because

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there are others less well off', is not only a psychological deformation from which she seems singularly free, but one she has deliberately set out to extirpate within her Party's ranks.

THE CONSERVATIVE ANXIETY about the state of the Church corresponds to a deep-seated craving for authority, both in the maintenance of domestic order and the conduct of public life. It is also fuelled by a sense of betrayal. Even if politics is moving their way (Conservatives seem to feel) society is not. The values they were brought up on are vilified. Here the Church is blamed not only for weakness and 'woolliness' – accommodating itself to the new moral order instead of castigating it – but for giving positive encouragement to those who are questioning traditional moral standards. As perhaps the most public national forum in which the moral issues raised in the 1960s still present themselves as matters of painful choice, the Church attracts to itself the anxieties which reflection on them arouses and, discomfortingly for Conservatives, to whom the 'New Morality' is simply 'clap trap', it argues cases out on their merits, forever widening, as it seems, the arena of dissensus.

Against such unpalatable dilemmas as these, Mrs Thatcher offers a moral world in which there are precepts which can be repeated with dogmatic precision and rules to be honoured and obeyed. The religion which she offers – defending orthodoxy against the shifting sands of permissiveness – is one which emphasises sin rather than grace, law rather than charity. It is the religion of the Ten Commandments, rather than of ethical complexity. It offers self-acting principles which, in the sphere of morals as in that of economics, will by themselves dispose of painful choice. Scriptural injunction is invoked both as an agenda for personal conduct and as a species of moral police. It is perhaps indicative of this that when she wants to evoke the glories of Victorian philanthropy, it is not to the Night Refuges and Asylums for the Houseless Poor that she turns, nor to the parochial soup-and-blanket funds, nor yet to the activities – by their own lights heroic – of the Bible Women and City missionaries, but rather to that great engine for bringing sinners to repentance, and inculcating behaviour according to rule, the Victorian penitentiary.

Mrs Thatcher constitutes religious orthodoxy with the same confidence that, in other discourses, she will evoke that mythopoeic category, 'old fashioned' law and order, assuming that her Christianity is 'traditional' because (as she remembers it) it was the way in which she was brought up. There is no notion that Christianity might be a revolutionary religion, as it has been so often in the past and as it is in many parts of the world today; nor yet of the way it has been used in the past by her own Party, as an ideology for defining the *status quo*.

Nor does she allow space for the way in which beliefs can be conditioned by their time. Yet her own case might provide an instructive example. At the heart of her beliefs is an entirely individualist notion of salvation which seems remarkably close to the 'truths' she teaches in economics. The church too, in her view of it, should be in some sort privatised, being concerned with personal holiness rather than social causes or public affairs. Even the notion of sin, on which she lays a heavy emphasis, like others in her Party, seems homologous with a wider party view, being invoked as the impassable barrier to utopian schemes of improvement.

The primacy which Mrs Thatcher gives to self-help – or at least her gloss on it – seems to owe as much to business liberalism as to a belief in personal responsibility. The tremendous leap which she makes from biblical text to a highly ideological conclusion can be shown in the following passage, where 'self-love and social' are not only connected with each other, but in some sort treated as interchangeable terms, and 'self-regard', from being a *starting* point for service or help to others, becomes the final end.

> The admonitions 'love they neighbour as thyself' and 'do as you would be done by' . . . do not denigrate self, or elevate love of others above it. On the contrary, they see concern for self and responsibility for self as something to be expected, and ask only that this be extended to others. This embodies the great truth that self-regard is the root of regard for one's fellows . . .

It is an exegesis which might have been designed to flatter the privileged of this world in the enjoyment of their good fortune, whether in the sphere of material wealth or cultural capital – but it is quite unclear what obligation (if any) it imposes upon them towards those less fortunately placed. Like a number of Mrs Thatcher's recent statements, it reads very much like a high-minded cover-up for narcissism; or in simpler language, 'looking after No. 1'.

However, revisionist Thatcherite theology (the Jubilee Group's booklet, *Christianity Reinterpreted*, currently being reprinted, argues that one main branch of it is indistinguishable from Gnostic heresy), there seems no doubt that it corresponds to many people's expectation of what a religion should be about. It has the potent appeal of great simplicity. It offers clearly marked boundaries between good and evil, right and wrong. Translated into terms of childhood experience and upbringing, Mrs Thatcher's favourite idiom, it offers the poignant, if illusory, promise, of a return to a security that has in later years been lost. As Mrs Thatcher put it in an early interview: 'I want decent, fair, honest, citizen values, all the principles you were brought up with. You didn't live up to the hilt of your income; you respect other people's property, you save, you believe in right and wrong; you support the police'. □

A number of errors crept into last week's article for which I offer apologies. Roger Scruton's surname was mis-spelt through a typesetting error, and Michael Oakeshott's through one of mine. The reference to the monocle should perhaps have been to Joseph Chamberlain rather than Lord Curzon: because of an extreme distaste for both men – or guilt at not having checked my source – I have not yet been able to bring myself to look up their photographs.

MARKETING

Tellydisc technique

Caroline Berman on a controversial sales method

DOES RICHARD CLAYDERMAN exist or is he just a perfect marketing solution? The answer looks like being yes to both questions*.

Richard Clayderman is the man whose beautifully moulded features beam out in two minute commercial bursts on TV as he plays neo-classical muzak, courtesy of Tellydisc, a company that specialises in selling records through mail order on television.

Selling goods in this way is a recent innovation on British TV. How can any company afford to buy all that expensive, often peak-viewing, TV time? The answer is they can't and don't. The television stations have a special arrangement with such mail order companies, or 'direct response' advertisers. Thames Television, for example, charges advertisers as little as £100 per minute, as opposed to the usual £25,000 at peak viewing times.

They do this for two reasons. First, they make a charge for each item sold or reply received, whichever is appropriate. Second, it helps to keep other advertising rates high. If Thames has time to spare, they don't want to sell it off cheaply to their regular advertisers. So they sell it at a nominal rate to the direct response advertisers.

Many traditional advertising agencies are unhappy about this arrangement. Ray Morgan of Benton & Bowles advertising agency was quoted in *Marketing Week* as saying the cheap rates for direct response advertisers 'amounts to a grotesque manipulation of the rate card'. His own client, Ronco, has to pay full rates to advertise records sold through retail outlets. He thinks that companies like Tellydisc therefore have an unfair advantage. However, the IBA approves of the move and believes it opens up TV advertising to companies that wouldn't normally be able to afford it.

Thames TV has strict rules about the special rate. Any item thus advertised must not be sold in shops or any retail outlet during the advertising campaign and for three months after it ends. But here Tellydisc have been very clever in their marketing of Richard Clayderman. Clayderman's record has been up to No. 7 in the British LP charts, based on retail sales. But the record being sold in the shops is on the Decca, not the Tellydisc label. The two records are not identical, although some of the tracks are.

Howard Harding, Clayderman's press officer, explained that when Decca signed up Richard Clayderman it was done in parallel with a deal made with Tellydisc.

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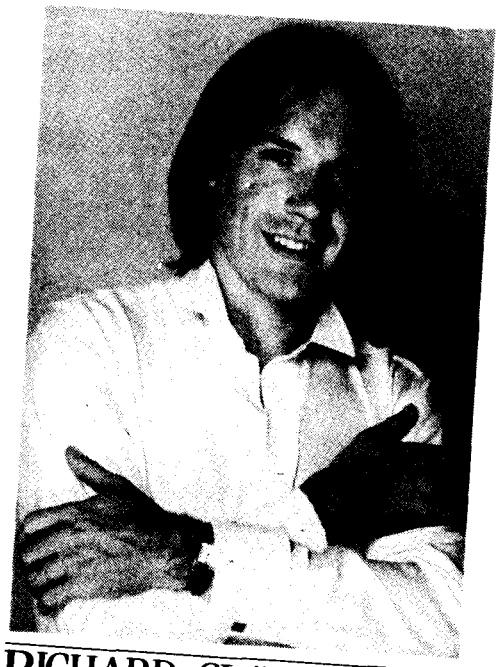

Both companies were to release their records simultaneously, and Tellydisc pays Decca a royalty for every Clayderman record it sells. The two companies worked in harmony to launch their new artist in the UK. It was a unique kind of marketing. Both records have now sold over 300,000 copies in Britain, which puts them in the platinum league.

Denis Knowles of Tellydisc said that Decca approached him last summer and asked if he'd put Richard Clayderman out on Tellydisc. Knowles is the man who 'broke' Barry Manilow on the British market and one of the first record promoters to use the direct sales technique. 'Television doesn't always work for all artists,' said Knowles. 'The public aren't as gullible as you think. But Clayderman had wide appeal – the neo-classical piano music and a good looking man playing it: it worked beautifully. I'm always looking out for that combination.'

Knowles explains the secret of Tellydisc's marketing successes: 'When you market something for a broad market place you need a broad appeal. Stay away from the under 25s, who are light TV viewers and appeal to adult audiences.' The Tellydisc target age group is from 25 to 60.

Howard Harding explained that the direct response selling technique has opened up new fields for the record business. Records now sell to people who are intimidated by record shops. Tellydiscs appeal to the middle-of-the-road audience.

Some tellydiscs have been 'compilation' albums, which use a strong emotive element to sell the record. One was called 'Moments'. Knowles said this was self-indulgence on his part. 'It was all the tunes I loved, like Cliff Richard's "Mystery Nights" and Clifford T. Ward's "Gaye". All beautiful songs with beautiful structures, not chart songs.'

Last September Ariola – a large international record company owning 50 per cent of Tellydisc – pulled out because, according to Denis Knowles, they were too busy with the record company to take more than a financial interest in the venture. It would also have been difficult for Tellydisc, if Ariola remained a shareholder, because of dealings with rival record companies. The Clayderman deal with Decca, for example, would have conflicted with Ariola's other interests. The shares were bought by City investors Anthony Gover and Wensley Grosvenor Haydon-Baillie.

Charles Vere Nicholl is the enigmatic chief executive of Tellydisc. He is also a director of the Hutton Company, who have the advertising account for Thames Television. It took almost four days to breach the barriers of well-spoken, polite, but firm women, who insisted that Mr Vere Nicholl was either busy, tied up, in a meeting, or out. Finally, he explained that it was group policy to have 'an orchestrated approach to publicity' and nothing could be revealed for another two months. However, it's rumoured that in the spring the related Tellyshop group plans to apply televised mail order techniques to a much wider range of consumer products. □

** He does exist, but his real name is Phillipe Pages and he is French. He was 'discovered' in 1975 by Olivier Toussaint, a flamboyant character who, in his role as mentor and manager, strives to retain Clayderman's wholesome image. Toussaint and Paul de Senneville wrote a song called 'Ballad for Adeline' and needed a pianist for it. They chose Phillipe and changed his name for something more appropriate for an international star. The record sold 15 million copies all over the world. From then on, Clayderman has chalked up sales of over 30 million albums worldwide. He speaks no English (his manager is his mouthpiece) and is married for the second time. From his first marriage, when he was 18, he has a nine-year-old daughter called Maud.*

PUBLIC SECTOR

Trial by water

Patrick Wintour charts the path to this week's water strike

THE WATER STRIKE has caught people on the hop. The industry has cried wolf four times in as many years, so that Aesop's fable seemed not to apply. In 1980, for instance, NUPE waterworkers voted three times for a strike, but were held back by the 20,000 General and Municipal watermen (broadly NUPE members do the dirtier end of waterjobs). Last year an actual majority of the 29,000 non-craft manual workers voted to strike, but the vagaries of the unions' Joint Negotiating Committee prevented it. Though the G&M's ballot went against a strike by only a small majority, all nine of their delegates on the JNC had to vote as a bloc against. This, with the one agricultural workers' vote, gave a majority over six NUPE and three T&G delegates, who wanted to strike.

This year such inter-union divisions have only arisen in Scotland (where negotiations are conducted differently). Three reasons are given for this unanimity. First, the Tories announced in the summer the scrapping of the National Water Council, which deals with industrial relations. The unions saw this as a Thatcherite attempt to diffuse the growing threat from the watermen by introducing local bargaining from next year.

Second, the government intervened in the pay talks preventing the outgoing NWC from offering 6 per cent as early as November. This may have contributed to Sir Robert Marshall's decision to resign as chairman of the Council. Third, earlier in the summer the management had pulled out of discussions with the unions over their claim – outstanding from the previous year – that watermen should be put in the top 25 per cent of the male manual workers league alongside gas and power workers.

This parity demand is not something dreamed up by national officers as a convenient peg for a claim. It has real rank-and-file support in the union's National Industrial Conferences. Reg Ryan, the chairman of NUPE's Water Services committee and the only lay member on the 20 strong JNC says:

It's been part of our claim since 1979. Out in

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5/6 February

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the sticks our members know and see they are doing the same kind of work as gas and power.

The change in the watermen's self-evaluation is a by-product of the change in the industry from being a local authority-run service to something approximating a nationalised industry. Until the 1973 Water Act, the industry was run by 1600 different Town Councils, Companies and Boards. Even now sewage is still dealt with by some local authorities under contract to the water authorities, and some 28 private companies still remain.

But the vast bulk of the industry is now run by the ten water authorities of England and Wales. Its structure began to resemble nationalised industries like British Gas or the Central Electricity Generating Board – industries with which the G&M has long negotiating experience.

The declared aim of turning the water industry into a public utility, like gas, was to increase efficiency and cut costs. In the latter case, at least, the government has been successful. Since 1973 capital expenditure has been cut by half and more has had to be internally financed. This was partly done by simply cutting government grant. But expenditure has also been restricted by a growing outcry over the apparent rise in water costs. The increase in water rates was in reality brought about by the fact that the water industry was moving from being largely financed by taxation to having to charge directly for services provided.

The 1973 Act obliged authorities to charge only for services provided 'having regard to the costs involved and avoiding undue discrimination between classes of customers'. This required a gradual removal of the cross-subsidy previously enjoyed by households of low rateable vaule. Water authorities have also gradually brought in direct billing of sewerage costs – previously submerged in the general council rate damand. This has meant the water bill, averaging £67 last year, has landed on the nation's doormats with the same heavy thud as the gas bill. No longer out of sight and mind, more and more people complained about their water charges. The water industry pointed out that costs had not risen more than prices since 1974, that productivity schemes had been introduced and that anyway water still represented only 1 per cent of total household average expenditure. But their explanations were not well received. Government increasingly thought that water employers were profligate and soft on the unions.

The government now intends to control expenditure still further. It is currently negotiating with the water authorities over what financial return they should be required to make in the future. Colin McMillan, the finance director of Severn Trent, is leading for the authorities in these negotiations with the Treasury. He explains that the government has since 1981-2 fixed an annual target for each water authority, expressed as a rate of return on the assets being used by the industry (measured in current rather than historic terms). All water authorities in England should be running a surplus equivalent to 1.25 per cent of assets by next financial year.

Some, such as Anglia, are already well over this target. McMillan says that an authority becomes self-financing, taking one decade with another, once it reaches a 2 per cent return. Beyond that water authorities become in effect tax gatherers for the government. In current negotiations the government is pushing for a 3 per cent return target. This would involve an increase in water charges of around 15 per cent. (This compares with the 2½ per cent cost of meeting the waterworkers' full claim.)

THESE GOVERNMENT strong-arm tactics come at a time when the water industry needs far greater capital expenditure to shore up Britain's collapsing sewers and leaking mains. All is by no means well underground. The National Water Council says an extra £100m is needed on renovation.

One effect of the 1973 reorganisation was the increasing dominance of engineers in investment decisions. Inevitably, they found reservoir and dam construction more interesting than sewage and mains renovation. As a result vast sums were spent on expanding water supply – to the point where we now have much more water than we need. This was done at the expense of mains and sewage renovation. 30 per cent of all water supplied leaks (80,000 mains burst a year), while 15 per cent of the UK's sewers are a century old. Every year 3,500 sewers collapse: another 1,500 block up. The chief executive of the North West Authority not long ago said: 'There is a very real danger that the rate of structural deterioration will eventually overtake the ability to repair on an ad hoc basis'.

The frustrating fact for the industry is that not only is there now a consensus that investment must be redirected to renovation, but also the technology has been developed to undertake the task. Ground radar has been developed to find areas where the earth no longer supports sewers. Computer mapping and closed circuit television have also helped monitoring. Similarly, leak noise correlators are being used on mains. The introduction of ICA (instrumentation, control and automation of systems) provide electronic methods to operate the water distribution system. ICA enables pressure control, with valves automatically maintaining pressure at set levels, greatly reducing leakage. But all this costs money and is labour intensive.

In line with its general policy on nationalised industries, the government has said that more of the capital costs should be financed through improved productivity. The industry has worked on this by introducing Water Industry Productivity Payments Scheme (WIPPS) for about half the country's waterworkers. But, on reorganisation, there were over 3,500 different productivity schemes operating in the industry and it takes time to assimilate them into a single national scheme. Nevertheless the total number of manual workers has fallen since 1974, while output has increased by 5 per cent. □

IRELAND

Whose life?

Mary Holland examines the fate of those who have expressed opposition to stricter Irish abortion laws

THE IRISH PARLIAMENT reassembled on Wednesday amid a welter of smears and rumours about telephone bugging and who in Fianna Fail had been offered what financial inducement. While Irish politics continues to be dominated by the spectacle of leading members of the opposition shifting the blame to each other for the skulduggery that went on during Charles Haughey's last administration, some more cynical observers are beginning to wonder whether the media has not fallen too readily for an exercise in news management – initiated by Dr Fitzgerald's government and designed at least in part to shift attention from the very real problems it now faces.

The most pressing problem is the Budget. It is clear that the punishing cuts in public spending and other measures envisaged are putting a severe strain on Dr Fitzgerald's partnership with the Labour Party. The government must also soon introduce the enabling legislation for the Constitutional Referendum on abortion – at least if the Prime Minister is to keep his election pledge to hold the poll before the end of March.

Both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are united in backing the constitutional amendment, guaranteeing the 'right to life' of the unborn child, and will probably impose a three-line whip on their deputies in the Dail. The Labour Party has demanded and got a free vote, which could cause problems. The Labour Minister of Health, Barry Desmond, has already expressed his intention of voting against the amendment. Other Labour deputies are already talking about a filibuster against the Bill. So Dr Fitzgerald has every reason to be grateful that the attention of the media and politicians is focussed entirely on the daily revelations of scandal and the frantic efforts of Charles Haughey to hold on to the leadership of Fianna Fail.

As every reader of the *New Statesman* knows, abortion is already illegal in Ireland under the Offences against the Person Act of 1861 – which renders a woman who has an abortion, or a doctor who performs one, liable to life imprisonment. This statutory prohibition on abortion is no longer enough for such groups as the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, which have become so strong in Ireland in the past few years. During the last election campaign, Dr Garret Fitzgerald – vying with Charles Haughey for the approval of such groups –

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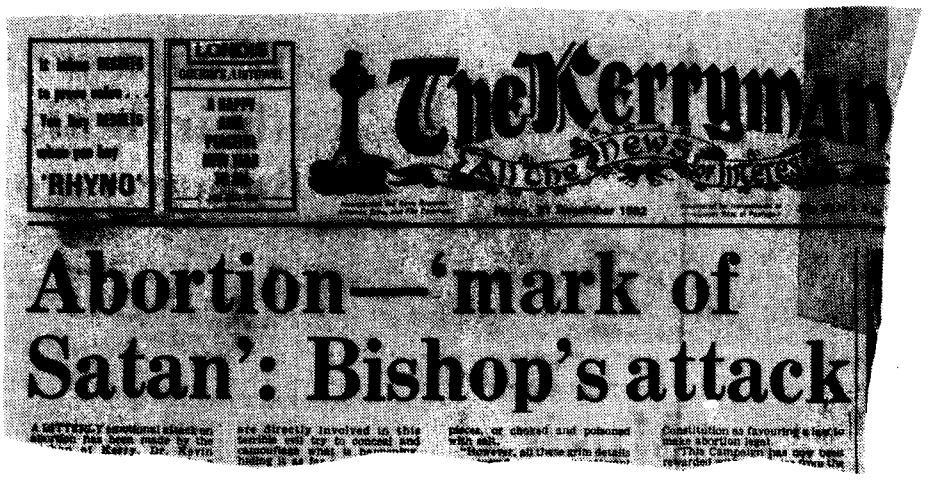
pledged that he would hold a referendum before 31 March, asking the voters to approve an amendment to Ireland's written constitution, guaranteeing to 'respect and defend the right to life of the unborn'.

On 26 December, the Irish Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child held its annual march in Dublin to commemorate the feast of the Holy Innocents. One speaker was at pains to make the point that SPUC was 'not a sleeping dog', that it could and would 'bite at' the votes of politicians who were at all equivocal about 'a right which is fundamental to all other rights'. She also had a special message for Irish journalists: 'Let it be understood that the Pro Life people will, by their commitment to truth, destroy the power of those sections of the media which operate the British-based National Union of Journalists' policy to shape an abortion law in this country. There can be no room for a neutral stance by journalists on the abortion issue.'


'RHYNO'
The Kerryman
All the News in Kerry
Abortion—'mark of Satan': Bishop's attack

In this context it is illuminating to detail what has happened to Irish politicians, trades unionists and others who have openly opposed the constitutional amendment, and to some sections of the media in their attempts to cover the debate.

Politics. Before last November's general election, two members of the Dail were identified publicly as sponsors of the Anti Amendment Campaign. Both were defeated in the election. Michael D. Higgins, the Chairman of the Labour Party, lost his seat in Galway after a campaign in which, he claims, both major parties allied themselves with the Catholic Church in alleging that he was 'pro abortion'. On the Sunday before polling day, the priest in one church in his constituency urged his congregation to vote for 'pro life' rather than 'anti life' candidates. Mr Higgins' name was omitted from the list, as was that of another candidate belonging to the radical left-wing Workers' Party. On the sixth count, Mr Higgins lost his seat by less than 200 votes to Fianna Fail.

Jim Kemmy, the independent socialist deputy who lost his seat in Limerick, had already been subjected to a smear campaign by sections of the local Catholic clergy and the media which reached a crescendo during the election period. In March 1982, Mr Kemmy had formed his own small party, the Democratic Socialists. The Party had issued a policy document on women which suggested that abortion was justifiable in certain, very limited, circumstances – if the woman's health was in danger, after rape, or if it seemed likely that a child would be born suffering from a severe congenital deformity. This document was greeted in the local newspaper, the *Limerick Leader*, with an editorial headlined 'The Stench of Death'. A week later, the same paper carried an interview in which a local priest compared Mr Kemmy, a severe critic of the Provos, to the IRA.

In October 1982 a meeting was held to launch the Limerick branch of the Anti Amendment Campaign, at which Mr Kemmy spoke. Commenting on this, another local newspaper ran an editorial 'Deputy Kemmy's Way of Death'. But it was during the election campaign proper that the assault on Mr Kemmy got into full and ugly swing. The Labour Party candidate pressed home the message in his election literature and advertisements, which read: 'The Labour Party is against abortion and I will support any measures to protect the life of the unborn child.' Mr Kemmy was denounced from a number of Catholic pulpits in his constituency, one priest going so far as to call him 'an agent of satan'. He lost his seat on the ninth count to the Labour candidate.

Elections to the Senate, although somewhat more genteel, have also been brushed by the abortion issue. Joe O'Toole is a member of the national executive of the Irish National Teachers Organisation. He was a candidate for one of the University seats. In the last Senate election, Mr O'Toole, who was endorsed by his union executive, was narrowly defeated. This time he again sought the Union's endorsement and undertook to abide by all its policies on matters affecting education. He was asked only one question by the executive's members – what was his attitude to the constitutional amendment? In fact, Mr O'Toole's attitude was already well known, for he had been a founding member of a group called Teachers against the Amendment. He repeated his view that, although he was personally strongly opposed to abortion, he was also opposed to the referendum, particularly at a time when 'deprived children are being denied a proper education because of shortage of money'. The INTO executive refused to endorse his candidacy and, rather than cause further divisions within his union, Mr O'Toole withdrew from the Senate race.

Trades Unions. Another conflict involving the trades unions and the amendment began on 1 January, when the executive of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, to which 91 unions in Ireland (North and South) are affiliated, issued a statement describing the amendment as 'undesirable and unnecessary'. The statement, which had originated with the ICTU's Women's Advisory Committee, focussed on the pressing need for radical reforms in the area of family law. On 2 January, Cardinal O Fiach, the Catholic primate, expressed his views on Irish radio. 'I am sorry to hear such an influential body as the ICTU is coming out on what could be interpreted as the anti-life side.' Others were less restrained in their comments. A letter from the Irish Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child to the *Irish Times* argued that the ICTU 'had shown themselves unreservedly in favour of butchering unborn children'.

The Media. In this context the main hope of getting widespread and rational debate on the issue rests with radio and television. Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE) has as good a record as any state broadcasting service for the quality of its coverage of such issues. Once again, it seems that this referendum may prove an exception. On 31 December, the RTE Authority annouced that the referendum would only be discussed on programmes directly involved in the presentation and analysis of current affairs. This was to explain the decision taken by Fred O'Donovan, the Chairman of the Authority, that the amendment could not be discussed on one particular programme, *The Late, Late Show,* which also happens to be the most popular single TV programme in the country – a skilful blend of light entertainment, politics and social concern. As an anchorman, Gay Byrne has no equal in Britain. Over two decades his programme has debated contraception, divorce, the EEC, women's rights, the North and has brought a considerable degree of enlightenment on these issues to a much broader audience than would normally watch a current affairs programme.

On 11 January, Mr O'Donovan expanded on his reasons for refusing to allow *The Late, Late Show* to deal with the referendum. The anti-abortion amendment, he said, was the most important issue the country would ever have to debate because 'death on demand is what we are talking about and that in my opinion is a very, very important issue'.

Mr O'Donovan's comments have evoked protests from the Irish Council of Civil Liberties, the Anti Amendment Campaign and from trades unions involved in broadcasting. Not a single member of the Dail has asked whether a man who uses such emotive language to describe the issues in the forthcoming referendum is fit to be the Chairman of a Broadcasting Authority with a statutory duty to ensure that all such issues be treated impartially and without bias. □

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The new poor law

Ros Franey exposes the deficiences in Oxford's housing of homeless claimants. Additional reporting by Jonathan Coe and Simon Beck

IN JULY 1982 Peter McIntyre, a journalist on the *Oxford Mail*, followed up allegations that private landlords in the city were overcrowding their boarding houses and taking money from homeless people who were not actually staying there. A couple of days after he had interviewed the manager of the Oxford Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), his editor received a visit from the police who told him to drop the story because the *Mail*'s investigations were pre-empting their own. McIntyre was summoned to an interview with Detective Inspector Roy Payne at St Aldgates Police Station. He asked who the police were moving against and Payne said, 'the landlords'.

But it was against the claimants, not the landlords, that the police mounted an elaborate operation. They called it Operation Major and planned it jointly with the DHSS. They set up a fake 'temporary' benefit office and on 2 September 1982 arrested everyone who walked into it on suspicion of fraud: 283 people were held throughout the day and denied the limited rights allowed to those under arrest. Over 100 of them were eventually released without charge.

The rest were herded into special courts. Almost all were denied legal representation and refused bail. Later, they were sentenced after summary hearings. Far from being charged themselves, the landlords – originally the object of the police operation – became principal witnesses for the prosecution. But when they appeared in court their evidence proved totally unreliable and some of it was of dubious legality (see *New Statesman*, 24 September 1982).

Most of the claimants pleading not guilty had their cases dismissed, but by the time the landlords' evidence was heard, 137 out of 139 defendants who pleaded guilty had been sent to prison. Solicitors say that many who pleaded guilty should not have done so.

Meanwhile, the landlords continue to operate their boarding houses for homeless claimants. One of them, Jeremiah Cronin, told the police that his Iffley Road lodging houses, collectively known as the Nanford Guest House, had 75 beds. Even in the 'best' room, the atmosphere is grim, filled with the sound of crying babies, cassettes, the television and drunks from other rooms. According to Jane Pannell of Housing Aid, 'a middle-aged alcoholic can expect a room with three others and a caterer's baked bean can as a po.'

If all 75 beds were occupied every night, Cronin's weekly income would be over £3,000 – £163,800 a year. Cronin, an ex-British Leyland worker with a large house in Sunningwell, Berks., has admitted to an annual turnover of £100,000 and profits of £28,000. The second landlord involved, Haribhai Patel, runs about six houses with a greater variety of accommodation but totalling roughly the same number of beds.

One victim of Operation Major

Ken Thompson

Besides Cronin and Patel there are a further half-dozen small-time boarding houses, run by other landlords. Taking all these landlords into account, it can be roughly estimated that in a typical week the Oxford DHSS is paying out £7,500 to private landlords for homeless claimants – about £390,000 a year.

Oxford City Council (Labour controlled) has now inspected all guest houses in the city. But it has refused to publish a full report on those properties used by its own social services department and the DHSS. An amended report was issued to local papers showing that in a sample of two houses there were 27 faults. In contrast, the report on conventional guest houses, which it did publish, showed 19 faults in all 60 houses.

The council also produced three more confidential reports. The first, presented to a closed session of the housing committee on 11 January, showed how some of the boarding houses had been operating without even rudimentary planning permission. In the case of some properties (like 135 Iffley Road) they had been allowed to operate in this way since 1965. The second – 'not to be divulged to outside bodies' – gave details of the planning abuses. Some measure of the overcrowding that is condoned is also given: in 160 Iffley Road, 11 adults and six babies were living in six bedrooms.

The third report reviews the powers open to the council, concluding that 'the present policies are considered to be adequate'. CHAR, the National Campaign for the Single Homeless, obtained copies of all the reports. The opinion of experts who examined them was that the officials who wrote the reports did not understand the powers available to the council to deal with the city's housing crisis.

THE ILLEGAL STATUS of Cronin's boarding house has not deterred Oxford's statutory agencies from sending people there regularly because, they say, there is nowhere else for the single homeless to go. Cronin's is also well-known to the courts, which have asked probation officers to refer homeless defendants there. Cronin's and Patel's establishments also appear on accommodation lists handed out by the DHSS; claimants were being sent to both landlords the day before Operation Major. Shortly afterwards, the DHSS provided Cronin with a strong box in order for giro transfers to be kept for residents – thereby promoting the Nanford Guest House to the status of a 'safe' DHSS address.

When a claimant first goes to a boarding house, the landlord writes a letter to the local DHSS, verifying that the person is resident there. Patel charged £6 for this letter as an unreturnable 'deposit'. The letter elicits a voucher from the DHSS which the claimant gives to the landlord. The landlord then returns the voucher to the DHSS and receives direct payment for the claimant's accommodation. The voucher system has been widely criticised by rights workers for the way it patronises the claimant and encourages collusion between the DHSS and

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the small coterie of landlords selected by it. Landlords thus have a captive clientele, and assured income. In practice, the maximum size of the lodging allowance paid by the DHSS is fixed annually by each local office relative to the rates charged by the local private landlords. But the landlords quickly adopt the maximum payable – £42 a week at the time of Operation Major – as their minimum charge, because that is what they know they can get out of the DHSS. Some even raise the rate above this (Patel's rate rose to £45.50 shortly after Operation Major), thereby eating into claimants' living allowances. The effect of this is to keep forcing up the going local minimum rate.

THIS PRACTICE would not be possible if the DHSS inspected the premises and exercised some authority over the facilities to be provided in return for charging maximum rates. It could be further controlled if the Council's environmental health department used its powers to enforce housing standards. But, like the Council, the DHSS was not carrying out inspections prior to Operation Major.

Like homeless people everywhere, Oxford's single homeless need decent rented accommodation where they can settle down permanently. The local authority doesn't help them. It won't even allow them to register on its active waiting list of 7-8,000 people until they reach 55 – an unusually stringent qualification.

Yet even if Oxford City Council – and other local authorities – had the will to do more, the drastic cuts in government funds for housing investment make it difficult. Between 1979 and 1984 the government will have *halved* its total expenditure on public housing. It is ironic that at the same time it has allowed private landlords to make fortunes by providing low quality accommodation which the homeless don't want and the taxpayer can ill afford.

The 'balance' of Operation Major was ironic too. It cost the tax-payer £180,000 all together. The amount of fraud eventually detected was £60,000. This does not explain why police and the DHSS at the press conference on 2 September claimed that the operation had achieved a £1.5 million saving in benefit fraud.

Nor does it explain why the police were involved at all. The DHSS has its own machinery for investigating suspected fraud. Nor why the police first claimed that they were investigating suspected fraud by landlords. But it was a significant propaganda victory for all those who claimed that scrounging claimants were milking the State of money. And it did appear to vindicate the government's widely criticised decision, in Autumn 1981, to set up the specialist Claims Control Teams to investigate claimants' frauds.

POOR LAW, the mass arrest of homeless claimants in Oxford, by Ros Franey, published by CHAR (the campaign for single homeless people), the Child Poverty Action Group, the Claimants' Defence Committee, the National Association of Probation Officers and the National Council for Civil Liberties. Available from CHAR, 27 John Adam Street, London WC2, £1.95 + 20p p&p.

FALKLANDS

Marginal land

Fred Pearce looks at an absentee landlord

IF MRS THATCHER had time – between visiting war graves and army barracks during her pre-Franks visit to the Falklands – to take a look at the islanders themselves, what did she make of them? Did she see a brave and proud people for whose freedom Our Boys have died. Or did she, like Lord Shackleton, who reported on the islands in 1976, see an impoverished people in a state of 'dependence' on a handful of absentee landlords, notably the notorious Falklands Islands Company?

The truth is that these islands – the last outpost of true Englishness, we have been told – have been bled almost to death. Shackleton found that 'none of the companies had engaged in long-term borrowing to raise capital nor had they issued further shares' and that virtually all of the profits made from the islands – 'extremely satisfactory by most commercial standards' – were shipped back to Britain. Over four years, just £20,000 was spent by the FIC and other companies in capital investment in the Falkland Islands, while profits ranged up to 30 per cent of turnover.

Low taxes on the Falkland companies have meant poor amenities for the population. Shackleton found that the only social worker was a visitor on a Voluntary Service Overseas scheme. Old people, who are usually turned out of their company farms when they reach 60, are offered no special homes or sheltered accommodation. There are none. Many live out their final years in abject poverty in Stanley, away from families and friends. The education system is also appalling. Outside Stanley, many children are visited only by occasional teachers (untrained VSO volunteers). If they want a CSE or O-level, they have to pay their way to England. The only fully grant-aided further education was provided by Argentinian scholarships. There is no adult education at all. No wonder the British troops on the island (themselves hardly an educational elite) have taken to calling the islanders 'Bennies' after the simple-minded character in *Crossroads*.

Shackleton used more measured words. He referred to 'a lack of confidence and enterprise at the individual and the community level, and a degree of acceptance of their situation which verges on apathy'. A political party launched in the 1960s flopped. The Stanley town council was disbanded for lack of interest. Shackleton found an increase, instead, in juvenile delinquency and alcoholism, especially among the male workers on the 'camps' run by the farm companies.

In addition there were no roads outside Stanley; no newspapers; no television; no subsidies for social facilities or clubs; little work for women; and few private telephones. Instead, there is 'outmigration', alcoholism and a 'very high level of divorce'.

The Falkland Islands Company, in league with a bureaucratic and remote government staffed by highly-paid (in Falklands terms) civil servants from Britain, runs the shop. It owns 46 per cent of the land (other British-based farming companies own another 30 per cent). It employs a third of the workforce, runs the coastal shipping (one ship) and the main shop. It controls wholesaling and sells the island's only export, its wool. Its directors have a strong influence on other farm companies through shareholdings and the company effectively runs the Sheep Owners' Association. It even operates a bank – which does not offer overdrafts and rarely makes loans. Instead, the company invests its workers' savings (which are usually being put by for a retirement home) at the high rates of interest it can get in Britain. Interest rates in the Falklands are very low.

Who owns the company? Until 1972 it was independent. That year, it joined many other backwaters of British capitalism in the hands of the Slater Walker group. The next year, it was bought by the fuel-oil company Charringtons 'as part of a programme of diversification', as Shackleton put it. Then, in 1977, it fell into the hands of Coalite, the chemicals group, after yet another takeover. Last week, all press calls about the company were being redirected from the company's east London offices to Coalite's Derbyshire headquarters and Coalite's boss, Ted Needham.

One of the major recommendations of the Shackleton report was that the company should shed some of its land and reduce its hold on the islands. The idea was to give the islanders some stake in their country and lessen their state of 'dependence'. This has not happened. Immediately after the end of the Falklands war, Needham put dozens of plots of the poorest quality land, fit only for sheep-grazing, on the market – but to Britons, not to islanders. The price was £1,000 per 50-acre plot – far too high for local islanders – and the sales pitch seems mainly intended for British ears. The land's saleability will depend crucially on a government decision to build a road from Stanley to Fitzroy, where the plots are. Needham may yet make a killing out of the Falklands war.

But so far there have been few firm sales. Oddly, the main buyer is one Harry Camm – a long-time business chum of Ted Needham's. Camm got rid of a load of dioxin-contaminated waste after one of Needham's chemical works blew up in 1969. And Needham bought a toxic tip from Camm in 1981, when it became so notorious that the Derbyshire Labour Party included a pledge to close it in their election manifesto of that year. Then, last March, on the eve of the Falklands War, Camm bought a chunk of the Falklands. He is now trying to sell plots of it to intrepid Britons. Any takers? □

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DIARY

Christopher Price

It's an administrative and political truth that he who does the drafting gets his own way in the end. The Franks Report bears all the marks of Patrick Nairne's plausible prose – that priestly ability to ask a clear question and answer it in a sufficiently ambiguous formula so as to exclude from responsibility those whom one seeks to protect. (Had the task, of course, been to exculpate Wilson or Callaghan, it would have been executed with equal proficiency.) A two-day Commons debate has hardly been the best medium in which to parse and dissolve the opaque whitewash with which Franks and Nairne have coated the whole Falklands episode. The place to do that was in the Committee – by minority report if need be – but the task proved beyond the two appointed hatchet men, Merlyn Rees and Harold Lever. The real analysis has been left to the press. Among the more obvious hypocrisies of the whole exercise was the brief flash of accountability for our security services for their performance over Argentina. They did not appear – *prima facie* – to be giving value for money. Normally when the Commons debates a Report, MPs can clear the ground with relevant written questions. Indeed it was only the bits about security in the Report which enabled me even to ask Mrs T. how many spies we'd had in Buenos Aires for the year before the invasion and how much they cost. She told me (in suitable parliamentary language) to get stuffed and blocked all further questions on the subject. So Falklands Mark I has been game, set and match to the Lady; but as unemployment mounts and the implications of 'Fortress Falklands For Ever' sink in, the reality of the albatross she has hung round all our necks will certainly dawn one day on her currently fawning populace.

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The Serpell Report is such an ill-considered dogs' breakfast that, with a bit of luck, those who wrote it will escape my general dictum and fail to get their way in the end. Indeed, though the road lobby, the cabinet office monetarists and even perhaps the increasingly miserable-looking David Howell took it seriously, the 'consultants' involved – Travers Morgan (on the operational side) and Peat Marwick (to feed sums into the computer) – probably saw it as little more than a welcome juicy slice of the public expenditure gravy train. For, while London commuters, Scotsmen and Welshmen did badly, *they* did quite well out of it all. One can only admire the sheer effrontery of a government which legislates to ensure that every local authority housing contract over £2,000 goes out to tender, but then waives all the rules for its own appointees to each new quango it creates. The £370,000 to Travers Morgan (the Goldstein outfit) and the £182,000 to Peat Marwick (James Butler's firm) are merely 'interim' payments. Other bills will come in later. Travers Morgan's performance – 'pedestrian' in the words of Transport Department economists – was handicapped by its ignorance of the subject; Peat Marwick, the accountants, were rather the reverse. They are auditors to British Rail, and see this rather run-of-the-mill task as 'earning' them far more lucrative consultancy returns from the taxpayer. Ken Sharp, the Government Chief Accountant, has issued guidelines to try to clear up this cosy habit of funnelling public money into the stockbroker belt. But in the face of directives from Downing Street, he stands little chance of doing so.

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Another little boost for the Beeb. The *Oxford Road Show*, the Manchester-produced BBC 2 programme for youngsters, is working up a splendid mix of music and political awareness. They've an item this Friday (7pm) about deaths of young people in custody and how the details are so often covered up by coroners who lean on juries to return 'misadventure' verdicts. But not always. A jury at Weybridge last year decided that Jim Heather-Hayes, a talented 18-year-old who hanged himself in Ashford Remand Centre, died through 'lack of care'. The sudden transition from freedom to incarceration can have a devastating effect on any teenager – a poem of Jim's about suicide is woven into the programme. Next week a deputation from INQUEST, which campaigns for inquiries into such deaths, is due to see Mr Whitelaw to present a modest list of suggestions to make it a bit more likely in future that the truth penetrates the grey obstruction of the average coroner. Like legal aid for the relatives, for example. I hope he is not too preoccupied to listen.

○

January is the season for those Private Members who won a Bill in our annual raffle. This Friday, Norman St John-Stevas is trying simultaneously to reassert ancestral parliamentary controls over expenditure and get his own back on the lady he was once happy to call The Blessed Margaret – a witticism with which her humourlessness could not cope. I shall be voting for him. Last week it was Video Piracy, technically a private member's bill but also backed by Ian Sproat, the Trade minister who has now switched from chasing scroungers to chasing video-criminals. ('Piracy is too nice a word for these people'.) It was universally asserted that video profits were being laundered into organised crime. The problem with copyright in the 20th century is that the law can never keep up with leapfrogging technology, and organised copyright crime is to be found in the most unlikely paces. Oakham, a little-known public school in what used to be Rutland, was the most recently discovered den of iniquity; some person unknown sneaked on

Roger Woddis is on holiday.

them for Xeroxing their school hymn book two years ago and they settled for £4,250 plus costs when the music publishers took them to court. Deep down, in these matters, I'm an emotional pirate and unwilling to regard intellectual property on a par with goods and chattels. Ideas and music should be free and communal, to be plagiarised by all with the wit to do so.

○

I was wined (but not dined) this week by David Frost and Peter Jay of TV-am in their garish, stainless steel Camden Town headquarters. Though they may not get many ads because of the Equity dispute, they insisted they were financially secure; it seems Barclays Bank are generously, if somewhat imprudently, backing them. They want to be more serious than BBC 'Breakfast with Bough', with lots of parliamentary pundits on the show. I expect most of them to be Social Democrats. They've plumped for Alliance territory and the decor of their mock-up sitting room is frightfully NW1. Bill Rodgers, who lives round the corner, has already had a screen test. It could be his Last Big Chance of Fame.

THIS ENGLAND

£3 book tokens for entries printed (on postcards, please).

☐ At the ripe old age of 34, Roddy has taken on his first mortgage and mortgages are things he views with distaste. 'I mean,' he explains, 'one always heard that people had them but one never actually thought that one would have one oneself!' Tania, a delightfully down-to-earth girl, grins at me and raises her eyes to the ceiling. 'It took a long time for him to actually understand what a mortgage was,' she laughed. – Interview with Roddy and Tania Llewellyn in *Woman* (Mrs C. L. Smith)

☐ Real ale drinkers are being kept apart from customers who enjoy keg and lager at a pub in Southsea, Hants. Landlord Terry Little, 48, has roped off part of the bar. – *Basildon Evening Echo* (David Ealey)

☐ Children in Nottinghamshire schools have been pooling their money to hire pornographic films, which they view at home when their parents are out. – *Guardian* (Christopher Hawtree)

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Behind the crisis

Jon Halliday explains the domestic implications of Mexico's external debt

OPEC'S FAILURE THIS week to sustain the world oil price completely undermines the desperate attempts by the international banking system to 'contain' the Mexican financial crisis. For a steady oil price is Mexico's only security. In fact, what has been portrayed as a *financial* crisis is in reality an all embracing domestic crisis for Mexico – social, political and economic.

The 'external' position is bad enough. Mexico's total external debt at the end of 1982 stood at about $83 billion. The biggest problem was not so much the size of the debt, but its structure – a high proportion was bunched in short-term loans. By mid-1982, Mexico found itself unable to meet payments of some $22 billion in principal and $4.5 billion in interest. The outgoing President, Lopez Portillo, nationalised the banks on 1 September 1982, claiming that they had been 'looting' the country. Exchange controls were imposed, Mexico's debt was re-scheduled and a rescue package hastily assembled. In December, the new President, Miguel de la Madrid, lifted exchange controls, and the Mexican peso floated at 150 to the US dollar, one-fifth of the rate a year before.

'Third World debt' is, of course, First World credit. Mexico was able to borrow such vast sums because it seemed to have excellent collateral: oil. In 1982, Mexico earned about $15 billion from oil exports. It has overtaken Saudi Arabia as the number one source of oil imports into the United States and is, in effect, the US's strategic reserve. But, with an oil glut, Mexico's collateral has come to be worth much less than it once was.

When the Mexican debt bomb exploded, the US government intervened in an unusually direct way. The rescue operations were handled directly by the US government, the IMF and the Bank of International Settlements. Mexico is, of course, not just any Third World country: it is *the* Third World country with a common border with the USA (the only place in the world where the First and Third Worlds have a common land frontier). But the US government also intervened because the nine biggest US banks had lent the equivalent of 40 per cent of their capital and reserves to Mexico, in what were, in effect, unsecured loans. While the US government tried to co-ordinate its panicking constituents (many of them Reagan backers from the Southwest and Texas), the IMF corralled the European and Japanese private banks into a rescue operation which many of them disliked intensely and which they may now once again resist. Mexico told the IMF that, unless it softened its terms, the country would have no option but to default.

As it was, the IMF imposed a highly deflationary package which is now increasingly open to serious question, given what the Brandt Commission has termed the 'crisis of contraction'. Mexico has been told to reduce its budget deficit from 16.5 per cent of GNP in 1982 to 8.5 per cent in 1983 and 3.5 per cent in 1985. The government is closing down 106 of the 743 state companies. Subsidies are being eliminated or cut back on 4,700 items out of 5,000. Investment is being cut back across the board. Unemployment, officially 8 per cent last year, is generally reckoned at between 40 and 50 per cent of the work force of 20 million (even after massive emigration). Optimistic estimates put Mexico's 'growth' rate for 1983 at minus 3-4 per cent.

The IMF package has aggravated an already delicate social and political situation. For the first time since the settlement reached after the Mexican Revolution over 50 years ago, there is the possibility of large-scale unrest and instability. The government has moved over 20,000 more troops into Mexico City (population 16-18 million). Amost half the entire armed forces of this geographically vast nation are now concentrated in the capital, along with a bloated and corrupt police force.

At the economic level, there seems little the regime can do within the IMF straitjacket. Much of Mexican industry depends on raw materials and components (mainly from the US) to keep going. The huge devaluations have made it almost impossible for private companies to acquire the dollars to buy spare parts or materials.

The new government is backtracking as hard as it can on nationalisation of the banks. De la Madrid signalled this clearly by re-instating as Governor of the Bank of Mexico Miguel Mancera, who had resigned from this post in September 1982 over bank nationalisation. De la Madrid has announced that 34 per cent ownership can be returned to private hands, with the only proviso that no one individual can own more than 1 per cent (a proviso that can easily be circumvented).

De la Madrid: backtracking on nationalisation

Camera Press

Lopez Portillo's sometimes chaotic policies had one important long-term effect. They broke the compromise which, in many ways, was at the core of the peculiar Mexican system wherein a one-party presidential bureaucracy ran the state machine while the big bourgeoisie and private business operated within the framework of a nationalistic economic policy, and did not try to take over the state machine. Under Lopez Portillo, the main big business group, the Monterrey Group, was severely weakened and its standard-bearer, the Alfa conglomerate, *de facto* went bust with $2.3 billion of foreign debts; and the private banks were nationalised, along with their sizeable holdings in industry. The new regime, which is under pressure from its left and from the huge numbers of desperate unemployed, is trying to forge a new compromise with big business and the right. The government is meantime trying to hold onto its left-wing support via the corrupt trade union federation, the CTM, and its George Meany-type boss, Fidel Velazquez, who is 83 years old. When Fidel goes, the post-revolutionary compromise with the unions could crack and the left of the ruling party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party, aptly so named), might break away.

The IMF programme seems bound to stimulate further migration to the United States. The US is trying to exact its *quid pro quo* for helping to bail Mexico out. It wants guarantees about its collateral – commitments on deliveries and prices for oil and gas. It is piling on pressure for Mexico to modify its policies *vis-à-vis* Central America and Cuba. And, behind the scenes, it is trying to give itself added control over Mexican industry. This used to be protected by a law whereby foreign interests could not own more than 49 per cent of any company, but the new laws on repatriation of profits and capital mean that US interests have nowhere to put earnings (or can claim so) except back into the firms in Mexico.

It could be argued that the best thing for Mexico would be to default entirely. But this is unlikely to happen. The US will presumably roll the debts over – but this is no solution, either. The IMF package condemns Mexico to severe economic contraction; it will now be harder to raise the money to pay the debts. More people will want to get out to the USA. Social unrest is bound to increase.

In my opinion, there will not be a military coup, and Mexico will not join OPEC. But things are going to get a lot worse, not better. *Time* recently referred to Mexico as one of the 'so-called nearly industrialising countries'. This illuminating slip gives the feel of Mexico's situation – as a great country which nearly made it. 'Poor Mexico,' the old phrase goes, 'so far from God and so close to the USA.' □

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URANIUM

Namibia's secretive customers

Martin Bailey reviews the latest evidence of who is buying the output of uranium from RTZ's Rossing mine

THE TANTALIZING QUESTION of who is actually buying Namibian uranium has now been answered by a report prepared for the United States Government. The American study, prepared by the Energy Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, provides the first breakdown of the customers of the controversial Rossing mine. Further investigations by the *New Statesman* have also revealed how Namibia's secret uranium trade is 'laundered'.

Because of the political sensitivity of the project, details of Rossing's contracts have been kept secret by the mine, its largest shareholder Rio Tinto-Zinc and the South African authorities. The purchase of Namibian natural resources is banned by United Nations Decree No 1. Although this has never been accepted by the major Western powers, all importers of Rossing uranium have been worried that they could face an international protest. Last April, for example, a conference of major British unions (including the key transport unions – ASLEF, T&GWU and NUS) approved a resolution saying that 'a selective blockade of Namibian uranium is both feasible and necessary'.

Japan, the major importer of Namibian uranium, 'launders' its supplies through a Swiss tax haven. According to MIT, Japanese power utilities (including Kansai, Tokyo and Chubu) signed contracts in the early 1970s for 30,000 tonnes of Namibian uranium (a surprisingly large quantity) to be delivered between 1977 and 1990. This amount represents just over half of Rossing's anticipated output. The deal with Japan played a crucial role in making the development of the £160 million mine a viable deal. In 1974, however, Japan announced the cancellation of the Namibian contract, because of UN Decree No 1, and eighteen months ago the Japanese Government officially informed the UN Council for Namibia that it had 'decided not to import Namibian uranium under the present circumstances'.

But MIT claims that, after the Japanese cancellation, 'contracts for a similar amount were instituted with RTZ' and the company then signed a further contract with Japan for the same quantity. Our investigations suggest that the Japanese trade is handled by RTZ Mineral Services in the Swiss canton of Zug.

Namibia's customers

Year	Contracted deliveries (tonnes)				
	UK	Japan	France	Germany	Iran
1976				400	
1977	630	690		800	
1978	630	1070		900	100
1979	630	2010		1000	100
1980	630	2310		1000	(470)
1981	1250	2710	110	340	(1000)
1982	1250	2710	460	340	(1000)
1983	1250	2710	850	340	(1000)
1984	1250	2710	1380	340	(1000)
1985		2710	1380	340	(1000)
1986		3360	1380	340	(1000)
1987		2380	1380		(1000)
1988		2380	1380		(1000)
1989		1150	1380		(1000)
1990		1150	1380		(1000)

Source: MIT

South Africa's customers

Contracted deliveries for 1983

	(tonnes)
Germany	1200
Japan	940
France	770
Spain	770
Taiwan	680
United States	440
Belgium	80
Austria	40
TOTAL	4920

Source: MIT

BRITAIN IS THE ONLY country which openly admits to importing Namibian uranium. The original contract was for 7,500 tonnes between 1977 and 1982. Because of technical problems in commissioning the mine, deliveries were rescheduled to continue until 1984. In January 1976, the Cabinet extended the contract, probably by a further 1,100 tonnes, but this additional quantity has not been included in the MIT figures.

Former Energy Secretary Tony Benn claimed, two months ago, that the British Government had decided to purchase Namibian uranium for its power programme in order to secure supplies which could, if necessary, be diverted for military requirements. Benn claims that his civil servants at the Department of Energy actively discouraged him from seeking Canadian supplies. Once, when he was lunching with the Canadian High Commissioner, his officials gave him a briefing paper saying that he should not mention the word 'uranium' during dinner. But Benn risked ruining the meal. The High Commissioner then expressed his disappointment that the UK was buying Namibian rather than Canadian supplies.

The British Government and BNFL now have to decide whether to extend the Rossing contract when it comes to an end next year. Because of the UK's massive uranium stockpile, the government's concern about overdependence on RTZ (which now supplies the remainder of Britain's uranium from Canada) and political problems in Namibia, it is likely that any renewal of the Rossing deal would be at a much lower level than the original contract.

France has never given details of its contract with Rossing. But MIT states that the country is due to receive 11,000 tonnes between 1981 and 1990. The French company Minatome has a 10 per cent stake in Rossing. Earlier this month, the French oil company Total, which already owned half of Minatome, acquired the remaining interest by buying out Pechiney Ugine Kuhlmann. When the socialists took power in France, it was announced that Namibian uranium imports would be halted. But, last year, the Minister of Cooperation and Development, Jean-Pierre Cot, made a revealing remark: 'As for Namibian uranium, if it continues to arrive in France, it is not in the form of direct imports. France imports uranium only from South Africa.'

West Germany also refuses to state how much uranium is being purchased from Namibia. But MIT claims that the German companies Urangesellschaft (which has a 5 per cent stake in Rossing) and Veba have contracted to buy 6,140 tonnes from 1975 to 1986.

DURING THE MID-1970S, in the last years of the Shah's reign, plans were made for a massive Iranian nuclear power programme. 20 power plants were to be built at a cost of $30 billion. At the same time, the Shah's government signed a contract for 10,670 tonnes of Rossing's uranium to be supplied from 1978 to 1990 – although only 200 tonnes had actually been delivered by the end of 1979. With the downfall of the Shah, Iran suddenly dropped its ambitious nuclear-power programme and cut economic ties with South Africa. This caused consternation in Pretoria, as Iran was supplying over 90 per cent of the country's oil. By the end of 1979, trade rumours suggested that the Iranians were attempting to dispose of huge quantities of Namibian uranium contracted for the 1980s.

One possible answer to the Iranian mystery emerged only last month. It was reported that RTZ had just signed a 15-year contract to supply 4,000 tonnes of uranium to the Taiwan power utility. Industry sources suggest that this is likely to come from Rossing, and it is possible that this would comprise supplies which had originally been contracted to Iran.

Now that both Australia and Canada are developing low-cost uranium deposits, South Africa and Namibia with their political problems, are likely to find it increasingly difficult to win long-term contracts. South Africa, for example, can now only get commitments for a few years, compared with a decade or more in the case of Australia and Canada. MIT therefore concludes that South Africa and Namibia will increasingly have to sell at lower prices paid on the spot market, rather than rely on long-term contracts. □

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ITALY

Pace e guerra

Ben Thompson reports on diversity and unity within the Italian Peace Movement

BETTER LATE THAN never, the first National Assembly of the Italian Peace Movement was held in Rome last weekend at the University's Faculty of Economics and Commerce.

About 500 delegates representing over 100 different peace committees converged on the city to discuss the problems of creating a unified structure for the campaigning year ahead. At present the Italian movement is fragmented – a collection of local groups of diverse origin and affiliation working in an often uneasy liaison with the parliamentary parties of the Left, in particular the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the second largest political party in the country. Bringing these various elements together is no easy task. The meeting which thrashed out a preparatory document to present to the Saturday morning plenary worked right up until eight o'clock of that morning, despite the exclusion last week of the vociferously pro-Soviet Lotta per la Pace group, led by ex-NATO General Nino Pasti.

The problems of creating a unified movement in this country are manifold. In Italy the major difficulty is not the pro-Soviet versus non-aligned axis which has tended to develop in some Nordic countries and in France, but the tension between the PCI, which has the organisation and political muscle to mobilise large crowds, and the smaller more radical and anti-militaristic groupings. These include the League for Conscientious Objection (LOC), League for Unilateral Disarmament (LDU) and the Radical Party which, though small, has several influential peace researchers among its ranks.

This weekend's meeting was organised by the 'October 24th Committee', which was formed to plan the mass demonstration held on that date in Rome in 1981. Originally the Committee was composed of some members from various small left-wing parties, plus the FGCI (Young Communists Federation), ARCI (Italian Recreational and Cultural Association) and LDU, the League for Unilateral Disarmament. They were joined shortly before 24 October by the PCI, while the Radical Party withdrew, expressing dissatisfaction with the political platform negotiated for the event.

After the rally, the Committee continued its activities as a provisional secretariat for the co-ordination of mass demonstrations. It did not, however, have the power or the political cohesion to act as a unified policy making body for the movement as a whole. While this arrangement had some merits, allowing as it did the emergence of a whole spectrum of new peace groups during the last 14 months, many people came to resent the Committee's close links with the parliamentary Left, feeling too many of the Committee's judgments were based on party-political expediency.

Matters were not helped this weekend by a report in the weekly *Pace e Guerra*, a magazine produced by left-wing members of the PCI and by PDUP, a party to the left of the PCI. The report said that PCI members at the European Parliament in Strasbourg voted a week ago in favour of a motion calling for closer European collaboration within NATO, re-affirming faith in the US nuclear umbrella and attacking the non-aligned peace movements as 'a menace to the security of Europe'.

This attitude places the more radical groups in a dilemma. They need the mobilising power of the PCI, but at the same time they fear that the PCI, acting in the spirit of 'historic compromise', may settle over the heads of the peace movement for an historic compromise on cruise in order to avoid outright confrontation with the five-party government. Against this tendency stand many active party workers in the more radical FGCI, as well as regional PCI workers in Sicily, Milan and elsewhere. They find the Strasbourg incident embarrassing, and believe it to be unrepresentative. They complain that they need the co-operation of the Radical Party and independent groups to keep the movement on course, and that they find the Radicals' distant 'Freudian love-hate relationship', as one young communist described it, unconstructive.

With the production of Saturday morning's conference document the October 24th Committee announced its own dissolution. The meeting went forward to accept the proposal of the committee from Veneto for a new co-ordinating committee to be based on regional representation. Proposals for a national membership organisation along the lines of CND were shelved, but regional groups will be developing their own more formal membership schemes within the next six months. The final document, after its modification by the conference, is broad in scope, attempting, as it does, to accommodate such a wide variety of positions. Proposals for a closer link between the campaign against nuclear weapons and the campaign against increases in the military budget were accepted. The document also stressed the recognition of the rights of conscientious objectors, who form an active and influential part of the peace movement here. The campaign for disarmament was firmly linked to issues of human rights and self-determination of peoples, and emphasis was put upon the de-militarisation of the Mediterranean and the development of peaceful relations with the countries of the Middle East.

However, behind the apparent diversity of interests, there was a feeling of unity of spirit which left most of the delegates I talked to feeling well satisfied with the outcome of the encounter. The various elements decided they could, after all, live with each other for a while longer yet. Differences which might have proved destructive, for instance between the peace campers from Comiso and the more institutionally minded groups, were generously bridged from both sides in the common consciousness of the lateness of the hour and the critical stage at which the movement now stands. The one moment of near uproar which greeted a late attempt by Lotta per la Pace to introduce a motion condemning NATO re-armament but not the SS-20 served only to demonstrate the developing maturity of this variegated assembly as it moves on beyond 24 October. □

SCENES FROM THE LIVES OF THE GREAT SOCIALISTS: No. 741 of the Series.
STALIN'S POLICY OF SURROUNDING HIMSELF WITH INCOMPETENT YES-MEN SELDOM PAID OFF

Martin Rowson

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KENYA

Civil rights denied

President Moi's government has accelerated its crackdown on its critics. Paul Okojie and Sheila Millar report

THERE ARE TWO separate problems facing the government of Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi: the first is economic and social; the second, the maintenance of law and order. Since the abortive coup of August 1982, the government appears obsessively concerned with the second. Resources needed for education, health care, housing, primary social services, roads, transport and water supplies are being diverted to internal policing. For Kenya to spend expensively borrowed money in such a way will make its existing economic and social problems worse.

Already, about 3,000 people have been detained. Five of them are awaiting death sentences. Only the combined weight of the international community can save their lives. In particular, for some time now, the University of Nairobi has been repeatedly closed at the government's whim. Secret police have infiltrated classes, monitoring lecturers. Detentions of academic staff have resulted from unfavourable reports. Since August 1982, the university has been indefinitely closed. The students were intimidated and sent home without public transport shortly before a curfew. Many were shot on the streets, whether they were involved in the coup attempt or not.

It seems that the university will not be reopened until Moi's government has written and approved a curriculum purged of any 'subversive' content or 'ideologies'. The purge has extended to the university library, where the books of Ngugi wa Thiong'o have been removed and destroyed. Anyone who has read Ngugi's work will know that he is the best writer Kenya has ever produced, deserving serious consideration among the leading authors of the twentieth century.

Even before the coup, Moi's agents had destroyed the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre, where *Maitu jugira*, a Gikuyu musical, was being staged by peasants. Also, *Muntu*, a play by Joe de Graft originally commissioned for the World Council of Churches, was stopped at the National Theatre. The government is now maintaining a rigid control over public performances by means of licences and selection of acceptable themes for school drama competitions.

THE TWO PRINCIPAL Kenyan dailies, the *Standard* and the *Nation*, are owned by Lonrho and the Aga Khan respectively. These multinational entrepreneurs have always been more concerned to accommodate the regime than to maintain press freedom. For instance, George Githii, the editor of the *Nation*, was dismissed after he reminded the Kenyan government of its moral and international obligations on human rights. After Githii was dismissed, the *Nation* published a retraction of his statement in a grovelling special edition. The government seized Mr Githii's passport and placed him under surveillance.

This treatment was lenient in comparison with that meted out to Mr Otieno Mak'onyango, the Assistant Managing Editor of the *Sunday Standard*, who was arrested on 17 August and charged, on 24 September, with treason – a charge carrying a possible death sentence. He has no legal representation. The government is still trying to decide which treasonable offence he is supposed to have committed. There has also been a marked increase in the use of the laws of sedition to suppress opposition. The secret police are tracking down all those alleged to be in possession of 'subversive' literature. Among those in prison on this charge are Maina wa Kinyatti, a celebrated Kenyan historian, and the journalist Wangondu Kariaki.

It is tempting, in the West, to view Moi's repressive tactics as an understandable response to last August's attempted coup. In fact, his 'law and order' policies preceded the coup and may partly have contributed to it.

Over the years, the electoral process in Kenya has been deliberately twisted by the ruling group of the only political party, KANU, in order to maintain its dominance of the party and state apparatus. The refusal of membership of KANU has been used for many years to stop Oginga Odinga, the ex-Vice President, from standing for election. The selection of those who may join the party and then of those to stand for parliament has been used to squash dissent and to ensure a compliant parliamentary membership. A person selected to fight a parliamentary seat is required to resign from employment until the election is held. In 1979, the election took place several months after the dissolution of parliament. This meant that only wealthy people could afford to contest a seat. The last election was severely criticised; many seats were unopposed and, in some seats, the elections were so blatantly rigged that even the Moi regime had to nullify them.

The government has control over MPs even after election. For example, an MP absent from parliament for eight days is automatically unseated, thereby causing a by-election. Two MPs known to be critical of the government have recently been detained and their seats declared vacant. Currently, an ex-Vice President and elderly veteran politician is under house arrest, and his son is facing a possible death sentence. Two former MPs were intimidated and have sought political asylum in Tanzania and Uganda.

KENYA PRIDES ITSELF on being a model democratic state, but beyond the veneer of democracy is a truly repressive state, which has muzzled any form of democratic expression. After a rumour in the *Observer* last spring of an attempt to found an opposition political party, the government changed the constitution to create a *de jure* one-party state in the country – an event which received no comment in the western world, although suggestions of a similar change in Zimbabwe were greeted with concern. Incidentally, according to reports, those who were proposing the formation of a second party were arrested even *before* it was illegal to do so.

Lawyers have also been under attack. John Khaminwa, a leading Kenyan advocate, was arrested while engaged in the defence of two detainees – and similar intimidation has ensured that lawyers avoid representing people in cases with political overtones. Willie Mutunga, a lecturer in commercial law and an advocate of the Kenyan High Court, was arrested for possession of seditious literature on 10 June 1982. He was denied bail. Although later the government dropped the charge for lack of evidence, he has still been kept in detention since 6 August.

The neglect of civil rights in Kenya is rampant. Although the country is a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it has clearly violated its obligations under the Charter, and neither parliament, nor the judiciary, is in any condition to check the executive. The Moi regime cannot be voted out of office. Thus Kenya is going the way of other countries in a continent where coups have become the recognised means of changing governments.

The presence of foreign military bases in Nanyuki and Mombasa has added to Kenya's social and economic problems. British troops have been in Kenya since colonial times, but the recent addition of US military bases has caused considerable public concern. It was admitted, for example, that five jets were flown by British and US Air Force pilots at last year's Kenyatta Day celebrations. Our case is not that 'Kenya be Kenya' (to parody the catch phrase about Poland) but that those who have been detained should be released or granted an early, fair and open trial. Further, that those who are facing treason offences should be given proper legal representation. Finally, that the university should be allowed to reopen and enjoy academic freedom.

Wake up
You pressmen of the world,
I want to speak to you,
For the candle
Of Uhuru
Has been blown out . . .(Okot p'Bitek) □

Paul Okojie and Sheila Millar are at Manchester Polytechnic and Manchester University respectively.

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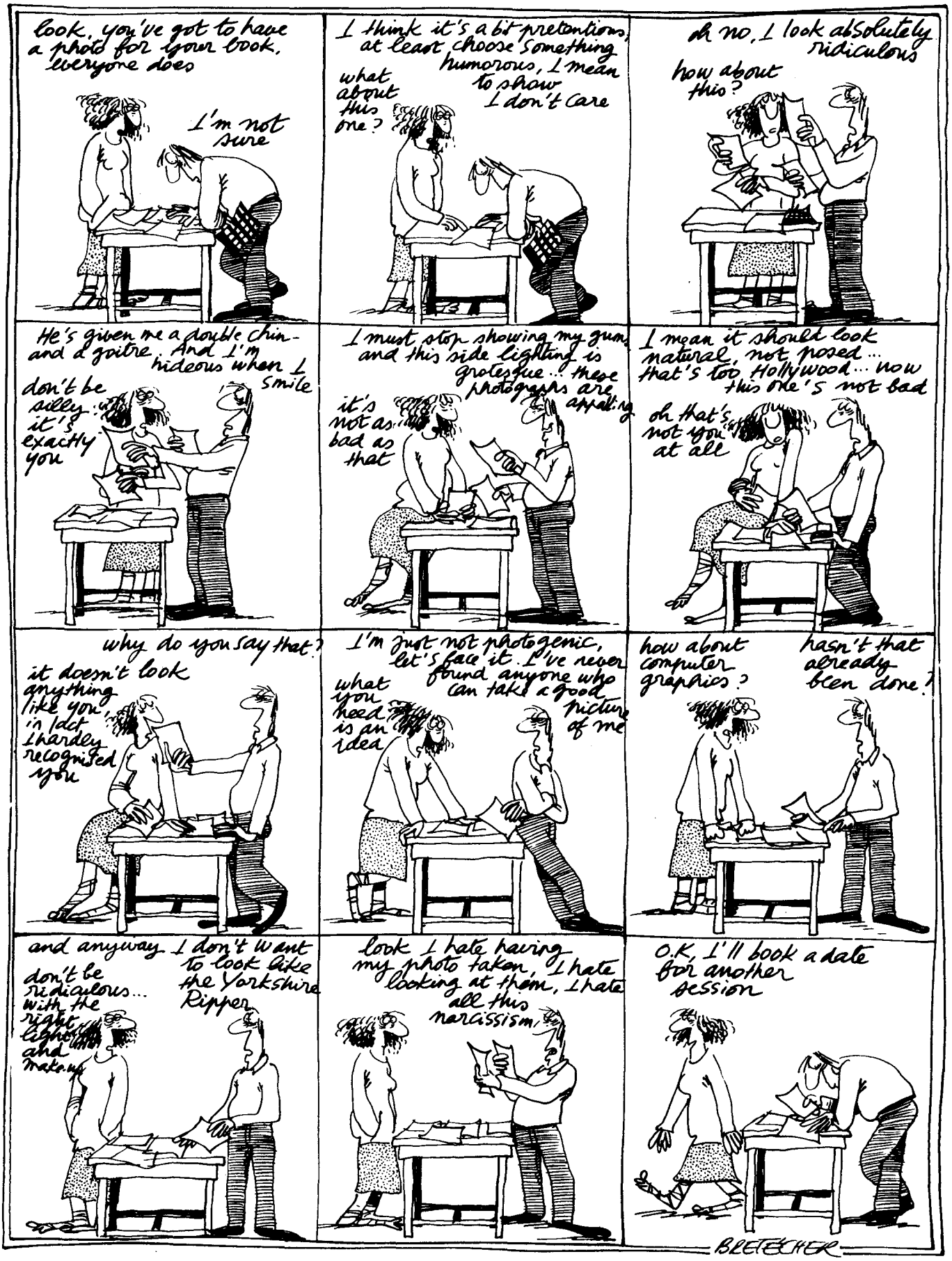
BRETECHER

TALKING PICTURES


look, you've got to have a photo for your book, everyone does
I'm not sure
I think it's a bit pretentious, at least choose something humorous, I mean to show I don't care
what about this one?
oh no, I look absolutely ridiculous
how about this?
he's given me a double chin - and a goitre. And I'm hideous when I smile
don't be silly, it's exactly you
I must stop showing my gum, and this side lighting is grotesque... these photographs are appalling
it's not as bad as that
I mean it should look natural, not posed... that's too Hollywood... now this one's not bad
oh that's not you at all
why do you say that?
it doesn't look anything like you, in fact I hardly recognised you
I'm just not photogenic, let's face it. I've never found anyone who can take a good picture of me
what you need is an idea
how about computer graphics?
hasn't that already been done?
and anyway I don't want to look like the Yorkshire Ripper
don't be ridiculous... with the right lighting and make-up
look I hate having my photo taken, I hate looking at them, I hate all this narcissism
O.K, I'll book a date for another session
BRETECHER

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LETTERS

Decentralisation

Socialist Social Work Group, London N16

Patrick Wintour's article 'Breaking the chains' (*NS* 14 Jan.) presents a relatively rosy view of decentralisation as advocated by Hackney Council in particular. He gives the impression of a well-meaning Labour administration trying its best to offer the community decent, responsive services while council workers and their unions remain resistant and awkward.

The reality is that many council workers actually welcome and support the concept of localising and devolving services. They recognise the progressive possibilities of breaking up the Town Hall bureaucracy. But confronted with the general economic and political climate and with the practice of the present Council in Hackney they are understandably sceptical of its eager assurance that decentralisation spells liberation for the local community.

They have experienced a Council that has publicly promised consultation with the workforce but in fact, while holding a limited consultation exercise with the community, has made no organised approaches to its own staff.

Instead, the message workers have picked up from councillors is that the problem with council services is the workers themselves. Faceless and unresponsive bureaucrats are the cause of inefficent services; little mention is made of the lack of resources and the constant pressure on understaffed services.

The resource problem is an issue the council leadership avoids discussing. The workforce know that 'going Local' should mean an expansion of services and staff. But Hackney is set to lose £15-20 million in Rate Support Grant this year. If the rhetoric of giving local people the power to 'control their own lives' amounts to the power to make their own cuts then decentralisation is a sham.

Few socialists deny the need to democratise the 'Local State', but to do it hastily and in bad faith, promising better, more efficient services without providing the necessary funds results in even greater disillusionment in socialist alternatives.

To be absolutely Franks . . .

Spike Milligan, London W2

> . . . in its judgment, different decisions might have been taken, fuller consideration of alternative courses of action might have been advantageous, and the machinery of Government could have been better used.
>
> From the Franks Report

With the above in mind: Thinking citizens without any political bias must be totally baffled in the light of the Franks Report. With an island like the Falklands, apparently under the 'protection' of the Government of England, and yet the Government concerned is totally innocent of not being aware of it happening.

Everything seems to point to the Foreign Office. Tell me, is the Government not concerned with the appointment of people in the Foreign Office, and if these people are appointed is the appointment because the Government believes them to be of a standing, whereby 'incidents' are supposed to be monitored by Departments which are paid out of government funds, for the specific reason of keeping surveillance on national situations that threaten our security.

Yet, the moment an incident like the Falklands war breaks out, immediately the Franks Report sub-divides the whole lot into a delightful cake, whereby one slice is taken out as being responsible for the incident.

It does appear in the light of recent committees, even though honourable men sit and report on it, there's a tendency to reduce the blame to as small an area as possible. By comparison, though a very different occasion, the death of little Maria Colwell, which caused such outrage in the press, eventually went by with literally nobody but the guilty father and mother suffering the jurisdiction of the law.

If a government is not responsible for the state of the defencelessness of a country, I don't see why they should take a massive part in being looked upon as the great arbiters of victory when it's won.

One can't help feeling that the blame really lies much further up.

Irish questions

Bernard Crick, Birbeck College

Tom Paulin found me less than clear in a book review and unjust to John Hume (Letters 21 Jan.). I had said that we should praise modern Ireland a little more and be less worried about failure to end partition quickly. I was convinced by John Bowman's evidence in his book that not even De Valera had held that hope seriously. But I added 'As for social justice in the North, that is another question – as John Hume once knew'. 'Hume is a courageous politician', says Paulin, 'and surely deserves Crick's support'.

He has indeed been a very courageous politician, passionately concerned with social justice in the North. But my past tense referred to the change of SDLP's policy in the last three years from saying that social justice through a power-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly is the way forward to a federal 'Ireland of the future', into believing that Dublin, specifically Charles Haughey's government, could somehow deliver Irish unity soon regardless of the constitutional forms and wishes of a majority in the North.

Some have lapsed from political realism into Green rhetoric. I think they trusted Haughey too much, neglected the need for support in mainland Great Britain, and may not have been right to have abstained from the Assembly – it was abstention that gave an opening for the Sinn Fein. John Hume knows my admiration for him. but it is not the business of scholars or intellectuals to give uncritical support to any person or party. I'm sure Tom Paulin, like myself, doesn't, wouldn't, can't.

END's open letter

John Endersby, Banbury, Oxon.

It is difficult to see how the cause of European Nuclear Disarmament will be furthered by the open letter to Mr Zhukov printed this week (*NS* 21 Jan.). The Soviet Peace Committee is not unnaturally offended at having been excluded from all discussions, meetings and conferences so far held on this issue. The reason given by the organisers, namely that they did not sign the 1980 appeal, is strange since nobody offered them the chance. If they are being asked to sign it now, then the wording should be up-dated, for much has happened since 1980.

When END was formed, most people in the peace movement welcomed it as a 'single issue' effort, i.e. to rid Europe of nuclear weapons. Since Europe extends from Eire to the Urals and from the Med to the Arctic Circle any talks about turning it into a vast NFZ should have included East European and Soviet representatives. Because of the USSR's phobia about 'Western-inspired dissident pseudo-peace groups', this implied talking to the 'official' peace committees.

To invite these need not imply either approval of them or support for Soviet policies in Afghanistan, Poland or elsewhere any more than their talking to us would imply approval of the British Government's policies over the Falklands, Diego Garcia or Northern Ireland.

Looking at the programme, the Berlin conference appears to be little more than a repeat of the Brussels peace jamboree of 1982 which really did little to further the cause of END. It is in the wrong place at the wrong time and will be expensive. Would it not be better to scrap it and to restart END on a proper single-issue basis with full representation from both East and West?

Ron Huzzard, Petts Wood, Kent

Three years ago I signed the Appeal for European Nuclear Disarmament believing it to be a clear all-European demand for no nuclear weapons anywhere on the Continent and in favour of nuclear free zones. I would not endorse that text today unless it had been updated to take account of US and Soviet weapon developments and disarmament initiatives in the intervening years.

END and the BRPF are being unreasonable in expecting disarmament supporters in the USSR to sign this 1980 appeal before being accepted as full participants in the Berlin Convention. The Finnish Peace Movement has protested and withdrawn. END is driving many of us into a similar position.

END's response to the Zhukov letter is the sort of long reply that some of us pleaded should not be written. I believe it does not reflect the consensus view of the British peace movement. The temptation to reply in kind to Zhukov should have been resisted. All the points raised could have been put to the Soviet Peace Committee at the meeting in Moscow next weekend. The European situation in 1983 is far too dangerous for a letter-writing exercise of this kind.

It is unhelpful to embrace this discussion on Soviet violations of human rights. Should the Soviet Peace Committee respond by publicising our denial of the basic right to a job taken away from many millions in Western Europe? If disarmers start by giving prominence to basic differences in each side's political and social systems we shall get nowhere. There are other avenues for examining these issues. Many local peace groups are realising the need for increased East-West contacts. Amnesty exists to deal with genuine human rights violations. Detente and co-existence imply initial agreement to work together on those issues where progress is possible; clearly disarmament is such an area.

President Reagan has insisted on a 'linkage' – no disarmament unless Eastern Europe falls into line with his version of human rights. END must resist diverting us down this dangerous road.

Nicky Bird, London W9

Why on earth does Meg Beresford of END dignify the Soviet Peace Committee with her rambling reply to their ridiculous letter. Everyone knows the Committee is Andropov's poodle and has sod all to do with peace.

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R. W. Johnson

Emotional specialist

The French
THEODORE ZELDIN *Collins* £12.95

In 1973 and 1977 Theodore Zeldin produced his two massive volumes on *France 1848-1945* for the Oxford History of Modern Europe. This gigantic work – it ran to 1,201 pages – was widely hailed as a modern classic. It was, though, a highly idiosyncratic achievement. Unlike its distinguished predecessors in the Oxford series – Taylor's *Struggle for Mastery in Europe* and Carr's *Spain 1808-1939*, for example – it not only spread itself over two volumes but wholly eschewed their narrative style of political history. Instead Zeldin offered the reader a dazzling series of cameo essays loosely organised around themes which were often not so much social or cultural as emotional and psychological. Thus he wrote not about the middle classes but 'The Pretensions of the Bourgeoisie' and 'The Ambitions of Ordinary Men'. In his second volume this type of thematic treatment was taken further with chapters on 'Worry, Boredom and Hysteria', 'Hierarchy and Violence' and even 'Hypocrisy'.

To some extent Zeldin's method was an emulation of Richard Cobb's – the use of comprehensively researched studies of private individuals or hidden groups to illuminate areas of history in new ways. But the emphasis on psychology, the use of opinion poll data, and the concern with the 'national identity' of the French was rather less Cobb-like. Moreover, Zeldin's chapter-headings meant more or less whatever he wanted them to mean. Not a few students recoiled from the result, saying they had picked up the book to learn about France and had learnt only about one man's self-indulgence. This was somewhat unfair: one could not dip into Zeldin without learning a great deal more than that. Certainly, though, Zeldin had taken with unaccustomed literalness his own maxim that 'Historical study is a personal experience, and the subjective elements in it deserve to be valued.'

Despite (because of ?) this subjective element, *France 1848-1945* was an enormous success. The popular press loved it: 'a modern Balzac' was one appellation, while *Time* hailed Zeldin as 'the world's foremost authority on Frenchness'. In France, where the book was translated as *L'Histoire des Passions Françaises*, it simultaneously gathered plaudits from *Figaro* and *Paris-Match* and became a prescribed college text. The French enjoyed the bizarre notion of an expert on Frenchness and Zeldin became a media celebrity, particularly when it was known that this '*spécialiste des émotions*' was going to tackle a book on the French and Frenchness today. 'My aim is to undress you', Zeldin announced to *Le Nouvel Observateur*, which commented excitedly that 'this evening he will see Guy Bedos, tomorrow Belmondo perhaps. But Guy Lux, how to meet him? "Your stars are better guarded than kings! It's easier to see Prince Charles than Coluche!" '

Unfortunately this new book suggests that Zeldin has believed too much of his own publicity and has, this time, gone right over the top. Again, the chapter headings warn one away: 'Where to find a Communist's heart'; 'How to interpret the anger of teenagers'; 'How to be friends with a peasant', and so on. There is here the authentically bogus ring of the *Reader's Digest* and one dreads the approach of the Most Unforgettable Frenchman you've ever met.

A typical interviewee

Camera Press

THAT such forebodings are, in the event, unnecessary derives mainly from the fact that, once again, Zeldin's chapter headings only vaguely connect with their substance. He writes with an impressive knowledgeability but, it seems, almost completely at random. The technique is much the same: the idiosyncratic tour of a sociey based upon a large number of private encounters (and Zeldin has interviewed high and low), bolstered by a large body of social survey and opinion poll data. Many of the interviews are with ordinary people, though the basis on which these subjects have been chosen seems quite capricious and is never explained. Occasionally they are colourful. Here is the retired head of a government research department:

> I am a bourgeois; I was born a bourgeois . . . A bourgeois is someone who is well brought up, with more duties than rights, who must set an example. To be a bourgeois confers no advantage on me: it involves dignity, loyalty, honesty, even sacrifice . . . It is like cleanliness . . . And I think people in the village respect me . . . The government is destroying France . . . It is deplorable. I admit the socialists are French (not the communists, they are Muscovites) but they do not see things the way I do. It's their right. I am a democrat, a republican. I never discuss politics.

But more often we meet mundane people living mundane lives – the Vallourec factory worker, the St Nazaire welder and so on. As they, no doubt, would be the first to admit, there is little that is necessarily typical or interesting in their daily grind. Lord knows what they made of the earnest visits of this 'emotional specialist'; something about mad dogs and Englishmen, one suspects.

Then there are the stars. Apart from a rather good chapter on French architects, it's mainly show biz. Zeldin doesn't seem to have managed Belmondo but there are long and sympathetic portraits of Yves Montand, Bardot, Jean Daniel, the comedians Guy Lux and Guy Bedos and so on. Comedians are especially important to Zeldin for early on he tells us that the key to national identity is what makes people laugh. The French sense of humour is, indeed, tracked down with great seriousness. By far the most interesting portrait is of Georges Wolinski, a Jewish ex-*colon* brought up in a right-wing middle-class home. His father was an employer 'killed by his communist workers during the Popular Front'. From all this

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Wolinski has somehow gravitated to being the hugely successful cartoonist for *L'Humanité*, whose ironic, biting self-parody has an audience far beyond communist ranks. Wolinski is not a Party member but says he likes the greater freedom and co-operativeness of working on a Party paper and feels most at home with communists whom he finds warmer, less pretentious and more self-made as people than others. Oddly, Zeldin leaves the obvious paradoxes here unexplained other than saying that Wolinski is dedicated to the destruction of 'the France of Marshal Pétain'. A little more reflection on what Vichy and the Nazi Occupation meant, not just to the Jewish Wolinski, but to many of the other characters here, would have illuminated not a little in this book. But, oddly, Zeldin makes no real attempt at historical understanding or sympathy.

This is, indeed, a major reason for the book's failure – and it is a failure on a grand scale. The 'evidence' of stars and ordinary people alike is treated with great gravity, as if they are somehow representative and socially significant. The effect is simply to discredit this way of investigating the past or the present. What would we think of a solemn book on the English national character which largely consisted of interviews with the St Alban's bottle-washer, the Southampton Tesco manager and so forth, interspersed by Ken Dodd, Max Bygraves and Diana Dors? Which said that the national sense of humour was the key to everything but which then concluded that that sense of humour was the same as everybody else's? Which – amazingly for a historian – treated poll data as unmoving social facts, with no sense that they are still photographs of a moving picture? Which treated us to a careful chapter on the local specificities of marriage, divorce and cohabitation but merely showed roughly the average picture for any industrialised country? The more one thinks of such a project, the more it sounds like a *Private Eye* parody of itself.

This is a pity. Dr Zeldin certainly knows a great deal about France and there are occasional nuggets of gold. But his whole project and especially his treatment of it are grotesquely overblown. Anyone who wants a readable run-through on contemporary France is better off with John Ardagh's *The New France*. Anyone who wants to explore the French 'national character' would be far better off reading French history, a pursuit to which one hopes Dr Zeldin may still himself return. □

Among this week's contributors:

R. W. JOHNSON is Fellow and Tutor in Politics at Magdalen College, Oxford. His most recent publication is *The Long March of the French Left* (Macmillan).

MARK BENNEY is reading for the Bar.

HARRIETT GILBERT's next novel, *The Riding Mistress*, is to be published by Constable this spring.

GEORGE SZIRTES has published two collections, *The Slant Door* (Secker, 1979) and *November and May* (Secker, 1981).

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Mark Benney

Holding views

Not Without Prejudice: The Memoirs of Sir David Napley
Harrap £13.95

> The Blacks vastly outnumber the Whites, who live in a constant state of anxiety and fear . . . It is easy to sit outside the country and criticize; if you live under the persistent belief that given an inch the Blacks will take a mile, and that one day unless repressed they will rise up and with great bloodshed take over the country, your liberal enthusiasms may well be dampened.

This is not Smith or Vorster on South Africa, but Napley. It is one of the 'informed and thought-provoking' opinions contained in the 'rich potpourri' of Sir David's memoirs.

It is hard not to have a great respect for Napley the lawyer. In particular his policy of personally conducting committals on behalf of his clients in criminal cases is quite laudable. A book such as this which demonstrates that, yes, solicitors are literate and have 'views' on law and society, is long overdue. But having read it and been entertained and informed, I'm sorry to say that it really is ultimately unsatisfactory.

Sir David is a little behind the times on the training of young solicitors, and manages to transplant Cannon Row police station from Parliament Square to Victoria. But I won't dwell on the inaccuracies of detail. Far more noteworthy are the many Blimpisms and hysterical political attacks which mar the whole enterprise. Sir David has a deep dislike for socialism and all its works and, in fact, stood as Tory candidate in the 1951 and 1955 General Elections, losing on both occasions.

He says that we have 'far and away the best police force in the world'; 'airy fairy social workers with their heads in the clouds' get a mention too. In his view the 'progressive breakdown of family life and discipline' can be isolated as a major contributor to many current ills.

If Sir David had his way, the NHS would have to go; National Service would make a comeback; and so would capital punishment: 'I have come to the view that the risk of an innocent being slaughtered is one which in those cases society must take . . .' The NCCL receives no mercy:

> The National Council, so-called, is a left-wing group with a very small membership; it spends most of its time making off-the-cuff comments, and because of its grandiose title misleads the Press into giving it enormous coverage, which its views seldom justify. It should be called 'The National Council for taking Liberties.'

This particular attack is then used as a springboard for a number of insulting asides at the expense of women. The ex-President of the Law Society has nothing against women – he is 'as susceptible to lovely or attractive women as the next man . . .'. He welcomes the growing numbers of female lawyers:

> It is to their benefit and that of their husbands and families that they have alternative interests to pursue when they have achieved what I consider to be their most important purpose in life, while possessing the means to sustain themselves if they are denied the opportunity to fulfil that main purpose.

No prizes for guessing what that is.

Ultimately, of course, this is the autobiography of a lawyer and not of a politician. It would be churlish to say that his discussions of the Luvaglio, Lipman and Thorpe trials are anything less than readable and perceptive. They are all the more welcome for being written by a solicitor. There have been too many back-slapping Bar memoirs.

There is one major surprise in the book. Contrary to the position he took back in 1974, Sir David now seems to favour fusion of the two branches of the legal profession. There are many progressive lawyers who share his desire to put an end to the Bar's bogus superiority and to make the best possible use of the available human legal resources. How sad that such eminently good sense should here be associated with the insidious cult of 'common sense' lovingly nurtured by Sir David and others like him. □

BIOGRAPHY
Harriett Gilbert

Mirror

Edie
JEAN STEIN edited with GEORGE PLIMPTON
Cape £9.95

Who gives a damn for the poor little rich girl – born with a platinum spoon in her mouth and dying, 28 years later, with anorexia, silicone tits and needle scars mapped on her arse? Not even Edie's friends appear to have cared. They used her as she used her drugs, to give an edge to their life. Every example of her self-destruction, her obsessive, desperate recklessness, was greeted by her hangers-on as 'fabulous'. Andy Warhol (whose four-month superstar she was) exploited these selfsame qualities on film.

Now, Jean Stein and George Plimpton have used her, as the basis for their magnificently crafted social documentary. Built from nothing but monologues by people around Edie's life, the book is a monument of research, interviewing and editing. Opinion by impression by anecdote, Edie's background is recreated – from the brutal, patrician childhood; through mental hospitals and art classes; to Warhol's Factory; fame; failure; death. Edie's unhappy broth-

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ers and sisters roam through the pages like zombies; while Edie's fellow Factory chickens – Viva, Paul Morrissey, Richie Berlin – rap on about amphetamines, sex-as-performance, and style. From its sewers upward, an era is reconstructed, with all its creative fertility and analytic stagnation; its cultural radicalism and socio-political conservatism; its wit and its lack of humour. Put together with the seamlessness of a single-author narrative, the book is a technical *tour de force*.

There are, however, dangers. Because the text is composed of first-person accounts, it acquires a spurious authority – but witnesses have been known to lie; editors are bound to edit. Did the Sixties underground 'youth culture' really exist in such splendid, drug-fuelled isolation? Autonomous though it believed itself, it was surely dependent on a world rumbling round on business deals and calculated wars and more-or-less subtle oppressions. By investigating the Factory lifestyle from within that society's parameters, Stein perpetuates the myth of its historical importance.

And meanwhile, what about the heroine? She remains no more than a reflective surface; a window with the night behind her. If *Ciao! Manhattan*, her most 'famous' film, is enjoying a London revival, Edith Minturn Sedgwick herself is no more cared about in death than in life. The most troubling moment in the whole of this book is that at which we become impatient for Edie to finish dying; when neither her father nor Warhol are left as useful receptacles for blame; when accusation turns its finger to the reader's own insatiable, voyeuristic greed. □

POLITICS
Frank Kane

Critical condition

The Benn Heresy
ALAN FREEMAN *Pluto Press* £3.50
Parliament, People & Power: Agenda for a Free Society
TONY BENN *NLB/Verso* £14 & £3.25

Tony Benn is, politically, dead. He contracted a terminal illness at the 1981 Labour Party Conference when he failed narrowly in the deputy leadership elections. His condition stabilised, but a relapse occurred exactly a year later at the '82 conference, and in his weakened state he could hardly be expected to survive the last round of NEC elections. The end was peaceful, hardly noticed by the national press, who were in any case then preoccupied with the activities of Red Tom, Red Dick or Red Harry.

Although both these books were prepared long before the fatal NEC caucus of October '82, the authors must have had some idea of the seriousness of Benn's condition. Understandably, they refuse to kick a man when he is down, but they also fail to subject either Benn or Bennism to any stringent analysis. Freeman's book ('a sympathetic exposition', according to the dust jacket) verges at times on the hagiographical, and is a good example of how not to write political biography/analysis. When the author is in almost total agreement with his subject the result is usually unconvincing; here, where any criticism is to the effect that Benn was not revolutionary enough, the result is idealism compounding naivety. Benn, after all, chose to fight according to the rules of parliamentary democracy and Labour constitutionalism, and his failure should be examined within those parameters.

The interviews with the *New Left Review* are open to the same general charge, but a lot more can be said in this book's favour. The questioning is more rigorous; contradictions in the scheme of ideas are pointed out and explanations sought; the mechanism of Benn's democratic revolution is probed. In particular, the assumption that more democratic control is a political panacea is subjected to some close cross-examination. This book is the nearest yet to a synthesis of the political thoughts of the mature Tony Benn, though this itself is an oblique criticism. The time has surely come for a systematic and considered elaboration of his ideas; speeches and interviews can never really take the place of careful analytical deliberation. Boundary changes in Bristol may provide him with the leisure time for this task after the next election.

Neither book comes to terms with the central problem of Bennism, namely that the man became too closely associated with the ideology, and Benn was not, in Labour terms, a citizen above suspicion. His Pauline conversion to radical socialism was forgiveable, but his failure to resign from posts in patently non-socialist governments gave rise to damaging accusations of personal ambition. This, of course, was unfair and even irrelevant, and far outweighed by his articulate passion and mesmeric oratory. But such things count in a Labour party where cautious mediocrity is valued above excellence, and where the man is still more important than the message. □

FICTION
Marion Glastonbury

Tableaux

Firebird 2: Writing Today
ed. T. J. BINDING *Penguin* £2.95
Entry into Jerusalem
STANLEY MIDDLETON *Hutchinson* £7.50
A Bloodsmoor Romance
JOYCE CAROL OATES *Cape* £9.95
Virginie
JOHN HAWKES *Chatto* £8.50

In 'Portions' by R. J. Lamming, one of seventeen varied stories in the impressive **Firebird 2** collection, a humble Japanese painter, labouring over a portrait of his patron's bride, is momentarily transported to a place 'where the images an artist receives from the world can be transferred back in undiminished, incorruptible forms'. That is what everyone is after these days: a communicable vision; a projection of the Real; a glimpse of the truth beyond appearances. Hence the general preoccupation with lenses, windows, easels, screens. 'The Key', Dai Vaughan's study of a revolutionary surrealist, throws together fragments of film, memoirs and memorabilia, so that the raw materials of a TV documentary challenge us to make sense of history. Consciousness is creative. Don't just sit there, Reader; situate yourself; assemble the meaning; deconstruct the dream.

Entry into Jerusalem concerns a painter's gift and what his public, friends and mentors make of it. Stanley Middleton, a prolific novelist, has been much praised for subtlety, order, restraint – all the solid virtues implied by his name and by that of his hero John Worth, a quiet, sober, modest bachelor who loves trees and the provincial hedgerows of his Midland birthplace, now half-buried by overspill. Worth's eye for urban landscape, 'the play of light on warehouses', renders him acutely sensitive to drab decor, tatty veneers, scuffed furniture, frayed carpets. A scrupulously clean man for

REVOLUTION, MUSIC AND SEX

dominate the life of *Lorenzo da Ponte*, Mozart's librettist, Venetian mountebank, London impresario and finally American patrician and sage in April FitzLyon's fascinating biography (£3.95). Wyndham Lewis's autobiography *Blasting and Bombardiering* covers the great battling days of modern art and the first world war (£4.95). Graham Wade's *Traditions of the Classical Guitar*, a distinguished history of the instrument, its performers and repertoire, available now (like the above) in quality paperback (£4.95). After eight years' imprisonment in South Africa, Breyten Breytenbach, outstanding Afrikaans poet, is free. His collected poems *In Africa Even the Flies are Happy* is now in paperback (£3.95). *Sex in Literature*, John Atkins's exhaustive study of erotic writing in history, continues with vol. 4 *High Noon (The 17th and 18th Centuries)* (£12.95). Vol. 3 *(The Medieval Experience)* now in paper (£6.95).

QUALITY PAPERBACK LITERATURE

new this month includes *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, Antonine Maillet's epic novel of the Acadian people, expelled from Canada's maritime provinces in 1755 by the British, and the heroic odyssey of one family to return (£4.95), *Lillelord*, Johan Borgen's turn-of-the-century Oslo novel about a rich little boy with sinister instincts (£6.95), Howard Barker's *The Hang of the Gaol* (and *Heaven* in the same volume), two plays by our best current political playwright (£4.95). In music Stuckenschmidt's *Ravel* republished in paperback (£3.95), four new ENO/ROH Opera Guides *Carmen, Boheme, Rigoletto, Tosca* (£2 each). Gambit 39/40 is a German Theatre issue (£5) and Journal of Beckett Studies 8 is now available (£5).

JOHN CALDER 18 Brewer Street London W1

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George Szirtes

Short wave

1.
Somewhere in there, in a gap between a taxi
and some indecipherable station
there is a frequency that's unfrequented
like an island, an administration
of ethereal incompetence, the voice of Caliban
deserted but with remnants of quaint speech,
an accent or two that could be out of Shakespeare

You tune in but the voice is out of reach
and seems merely to flirt with meaning; dry trees
rattling on an unprotected hillside,
hollow tubes wind whistles through. It speaks
at length through a protracted landslide.

Whoever lives here the transmitting tower
is out of date, there is no programme schedule
to list what may be listened to, what hour
the one clear and intelligible accent
will burst like a soprano voice along
the curving sea between the taxi, France
and Germany, all Europe in her song.

2.
This landscape is eternal night – not hell
or purgatory, just a weave of streets
settling like a cobweb late at night
in greys and greens, advances and retreats.

Only drunkards reel home, slam the door
and wander over to the wireless
to turn the dial in hope of finding music,
celestial and perfect more or less.

3.
These reasonable voices going on
and on, unconscionably long,
at all hours of the day and night
mean nothing in most places, not to me.
I speak no Dutch or Spanish, tell the truth
I only know my native tongue and French
and that barely sufficient to get by with.

My lips are sour with lager and my head
has no room for a second studio.
Anyway, what do they mean, these voices?
What are they saying? Well, it can be guessed.
Which is why I sit here listening
and turning dials, eavesdropping
on that Balkan baritone
who tells me what the world believes of me.

4.
The planets click like doors or whistle wide.
Their secret messages are understood
by fascinated children in their beds
who're used to lack of sleep and solitude.
Downstairs the broken speech of moving objects
where unrestricted chaos rules the air
and mother is no different from a chair.

We leave the children sleeping and ourselves
lie reading and half listening until
the close-down, when we kiss and frontiers blur
in line with international goodwill.
There are so many stations on the line,
and other music wells up in the drought
in waves that cancel one another out.

whom a collar and tie represent civilization, he is for ever changing his socks, tidying his studio, checking corners, shelves, soft-covers and passers-by for dust. During laconic chats with listless callers, interminable coffee is drunk, so it is just as well that Ursula and Millicent (freshly shampooed) are never happier than when proudly scouring and rattling in their respective kitchens. Women are practical, purposeful and brisk; men noble, vulnerable and irresolute.

A commission for a mural prompts Worth to explore and extend his talent, eschewing both modish brutalism and political dogma: 'guff, blether, hot air, jargon'. (Why are socialist bigots so common in fiction and socialist ideas virtually unknown?) At last, aesthetic passion transforms mean streets into the Holy City and Christ into a speeding skinhead. Worth's masterpiece is the apotheosis of the mundane, an incandescence out of mud-flats: not a sumptuous scene to enrich an Arab tycoon but the paradoxical expression of a unique, austere, solitary power that exalts and blesses the crowd: 'humanity guyed into glory, dancing themselves dizzy, God-possessed'.

The jostling throng of Joyce Carol Oates' **Bloodsmoor Romance** parades through the last quarter of the 19th century in a flamboyant, mock-historical, mock-religious pageant of inordinate length. At the outset, 16-year-old Deirdre, an adopted orphan, is abducted by an outlaw balloonist from the grounds of a dynastic seat in Pennsylvania. Her four beautiful sisters suffer equally mysterious fates, each of which, when investigated, leads us, through the wanderings of the *Zeitgeist*, to some densely researched and wildly caricatured phenomenon of the period: Transcendentalism, Theosophy, the theatre, gambling, brigandage. The cherished traditions of the national culture in the Age of Invention are sent up by the lurid chronicles of the Zinn family, for we owe to the father's pioneering genius both the prospects of perpetual motion through nuclear detonation and the achievements of the electric chair: 'death should be *showy* and *ingenious* and *flashy* and – what was the other? – ah yes, *American*'.

The American reputation for prodigious energy is indeed vindicated by this literary feat, which inspires, it must be said, more awe than pleasure. The narrator, a piously conventional maiden lady, addresses us throughout in archly archaic, convoluted, rhetorical, hyperbolic, alliterative prose which makes Mark Twain and Madame Blavatsky and every other character sound exactly the same.

At Bloodsmoor rape, bondage and torture are normal features of domestic intimacy; a girl's best chance of escaping them is to change her sex. In the France of John Hawkes' **Virginie** these things are sacramental disciplines through which the female finds fulfilment. High and low, ancient and modern are linked by the testimony of a pure, submissive, 11-year-old 'wisp of shell-pink space' who combines service to a patrician seigneur in 1740 (the year of de Sade's birth) with flower-selling in post-war Paris.

In each setting five women are recruited for the purpose of erotic initiation by an incestuously victorious master. Despite the intended contrast between pomp and squalor, artifice and appetite, stately ritual and orgiastic hilarity, the ingredients of sexual spectacle are common to both: exhortation ('Tightness, ladies, tightness!'); apparatus (bridal, corset, cage and confessional box); and animals, lustful, mutilated or dead.

Now that anything goes in elite publishing, I suppose we can expect more didactic reveries on the creation of women by the labours of men 'burdened, challenged, inspired as no ordinary artist is'. Hawkes is an academic and academician (i.e., a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters) for whom pastiche counts as scholarship. He has certainly borrowed a lot of iridescent plumes. But the connoisseurs of carnal knowledge in his 'sensuous salon' remind us less of the troubadours he invokes than of tutors on some richly funded campus, setting tests and marking seminar papers for students who show base ingratitude on graduation. □

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The Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to the United States

EUGENE EHRLICH and GORTON CARRUTH
Oxford £17.50

Ranging from Hawaii to Maine, from Colonial times to the present, from Authors' Ridge to Sleepy Hollow Cemetery to the village green where Upton Sinclair was arrested for playing tennis on the Sabbath, the editors of this large volume have bravely attempted to list every place associated with the lives and works of writers that might remotely be of interest to the literary pilgrim in the USA. They even include occasional pleasures, in the form of literary esoterica, for the stay-at-home wanderer.

Ehrlich and Carruth have also tried to outdo their predecessors, Dorothy Eagle and Hilary Carnell, who edited the corresponding *Oxford Guide* to Great Britain and Ireland. They include many more authors – over 1,500, compared with fewer than a thousand – finding space for practitioners of 'popular' genres largely ignored by Eagle and Carnell: detective stories, sf, children's books. Westerns. Admittedly, sundry minnows are also raised from rightful obscurity, but the editors are probably wise to err on the side of inclusiveness. On the other hand, an unhelpful index and maps notable for lack of detail fall well short of the standard set by their British counterparts.

In addition, the volume's treatment of living writers is most unsatisfactory. Mind you, Eagle and Carnell omitted them altogether. Quite reasonably, current addresses are not included. Neither, though, is any mention of John Barth, Tom Wolfe, Irving Howe, E.L. Doctorow, Thom Gunn . . . Conversely, room is given to such as Edward Wagenknecht, Natalie S. Carlson and Walter Havighurst. The information on living luminaries who are included is curiously sketchy and miscellaneous. Of Joan Didion, for instance, all we learn is that two of her novels were set in Las Vegas.

Nevertheless, the *Guide* is a welcome, and necessary, undertaking. At least there now exists a solid foundation on which subsequent editions can build.

David Montrose

Darwin for Beginners

JONATHAN MILLER and BORIN VAN LOON
Writers & Readers £7.95 & £2.95

As Thomas Henry Huxley said when he first read *The Origin of Species* on publication in 1859, 'how stupid not to have thought of it before'. In retrospect it seemed so immanent in the trends in scientific thinking in the first half of the 19th century. Lyell, for one, in replacing the idea of earth's history as an essentially static one punctuated by massive periodic catastrophes with the mechanical operation of continued, but almost imperceptible, transformations fired by forces still operating, opened the door for Darwin. Yet the barriers to extending Lyell's ideas to biology seemed real enough.

The apparently unchallengeable authority of the church and Bible on the side of Creationism, coupled with an Establishment that set its views by Daley's watch, made for formidable opposition in Darwin's eyes. Bishop Daley had argued that anyone finding a watch for the first time would have no recourse but to accept the existence of an intelligent designer, and how much more so must the case be when confronted with the world of nature. These views dominated Darwin for two decades. To challenge this comfortable doctrine with the alternative of a lottery of sexual reproduction biased by savage destruction looked impossible. Darwin was only finally pushed into print when it seemed that further delay would lead to his being up-staged by a young naturalist working in Malaya, Alfred Russel Wallace, who had hit independently on similar ideas.

The reaction when it came was not as fierce or prolonged as it might have been. While Darwin and his theory remained in seclusion at Down House, logic and the consequences of the Industrial Revolution had been gnawing away at the edifice. The result was a fairly swift victory with few casualties, except Bishop Wilberforce.

Science has followed society. The idea of progress had affected the rising middle classes. They might have preferred a mechanism less dependent on blind chance and iron necessity, nevertheless it did offer to justify and encourage their upward mobility. More materially, Lyell's geology offered tools to help manage the inorganic world and Darwin offered to extend this to the living world.

Jonathan Miller does his task well in clearly and simply explaining all of this and more, taking the reader through the first century of evolutionary thinking. He is ably assisted by Borin Van Loon's sometimes amusing, sometimes macabre illustrations.

Glyn Ford

Vedi

VED MEHTA *Oxford* £9.95

As Lear says, 'A man may see how this world goes with no eyes.' Ved Mehta, the 'Vedi' of this piece of childhood autobiography, became blind at the age of four. His father, an Indian public-health officer explained to him later, 'wonder drugs like penicillin had come to India too late for the time of your meningitis.' The experience of once being able to see, has obviously heightened Ved Mehta's abilities to depict scenes and recall characters in his dark world. *Vedi* is an exercise *à la recherche du temps perdu*. Mehta describes his boyhood spent between Dadar, a ramshackle boarding school for the blind in Bombay, and his home in the Punjab. The small boy's need to be loved both at home and at school is eloquently stressed. Personal difficulties are clearly remembered. At home for the holidays, 'it seemed that at the table everyone was always referring to the things that had happened while I was away.' Innocent, funny, yet at times cruel, Vedi's experiences, brilliantly and ingeniously told here in a fusion of infant and adult voices, enhance one's understanding of humanity in general, and India in particular.

Brian Martin

Infamy: Pearl Harbour and its Aftermath

JOHN TOLAND *Methuen* £9.50

The Pearl Harbour disaster remains an American nightmare. In *Infamy* John Toland examines the attack and its sequel. He claims that Roosevelt and his advisers had prior knowledge of the strike, and engineered the United States' entry into the war (in the face of domestic isolationism) by withholding the information from the authorities at Pearl. Investigations by the Army, Navy and Congress, Toland believes, failed to put the blame where it belonged – with Roosevelt.

A revisionist approach to history, in the mould of A.J.P. Taylor or Fritz Fischer, can be vital and contributory, but Toland's 'great conspiracy' theory has been worked to death over the past decades. His cited evidence of collusion in Washington, from sources as disparate as 'Seaman First Class Z', FBI agents, and the discredited Japanese 'East Wind Rain' despatch, is inconclusive.

The facts are that in August 1940 American cryptographers broke the 'Purple' code to Japan's diplomatic radio traffic, but failed to crack the Japanese Navy's code, which remained secure until the eve of Midway in June 1942. Even during the crescendo of Japanese radio communications during November and December 1941, the Purple code did not reveal the precise targets for a Japanese attack. It is true that, literally minutes before the strike against Pearl Harbour, American units sank Japanese midget submarines just outside the base, and that the large formation of approaching aircraft was plotted by American radar, but the warnings from these different sources were misinterpreted or ignored by HQ at Pearl.

Post-Watergate, the American presidential image is tarnished, but Toland is still asking us to believe that Roosevelt, the Washington hierarchy; and even the upper echelons at Pearl, connived in the deaths of 2,112 of their countrymen, massive naval destruction and national humiliation. Roosevelt must bear some responsibility, but the disaster was caused mainly by Japan's military and economic ambitions, and compounded by American complacency, faulty intelligence, and inter-service rivalry.

Jack Bullen

Inside Belsen

HANNA LEVY-HASS *Harvester* £9.95

Hanna Levy-Hass was interned at Belsen in August 1944 after it was converted into an assembly camp for 'exchange Jews', those fortunate enough to be connected to influential personalities in the Allied countries or deemed to be valuable political hostages to the Nazis.

She records in nightmarish, often moving detail the daily humiliations suffered by the prisoners. The terror, beatings and chronic hunger that had the effect of near-mutation '. . . one begins to mistake the dead for the living. Not that there is much difference. We are skeletons that can still move, whereas they are skeletons that cannot.'

The thrust of Levy-Hass's diary is focussed on Belsen 'society': how the pervasive iniquity of camp life led to the 'utter collapse of solidarity and moral choice into an abyss of villainous individualism'. She embarks on the novel experiment of superimposing the Belsen hell on to outside life. And one of her drawn conclusions exemplifies the 'lack of moral fibre' in man in contrast to more morally stoic women.

This book is going to generate fervid controversy in Israel, the Jewish world and elsewhere because the author juxtaposes her diary of Belsen existence with an interview conducted by Eike Geisel about the author's radical Marxist beliefs; an exercise hitherto practised by luminaries of the Israeli right like Mr Begin, who drains the Holocaust of its symbolism to vindicate his actions and score minor political points. If such was the author's intention, I find it similarly distasteful. If, on the other hand, as the blurb suggests, it is a desperate attempt to 'make sense' of life after the Nazi genocide, it is indeed an inspiring, humanistic treatment.

The author's struggle to help build socialism in Israel began soon after Andrei Gromyko's *imprimatur* of Zionism at the UN in 1947. After years of work in Israel's fragmented far-left she now makes a plea for the emergence of a much-needed cohesive left-front. Additionally Levy-Hass provides a discourse on the strength, weakness and difficulties facing the Israeli feminist movement. This is on the whole an absorbing work that will aid those fighting for the preservation of Israeli democracy.

David Harounoff

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Derek Ridger

ROCK MUSIC
Mary Harron

Froth, sparkle and pop

TOWARDS the end of last year I went up to Edinburgh to interview ABC and check out their new stage extravaganza. I found their terribly clever, terribly knowing stage show (a Busby Berkeley style orchestra, Elvis Presley gold lamé suits) lifeless and cold and wondered why I hadn't stayed at home with the album. And I wondered why, when there are so many wonderful pop songs about, the general mood is so wearying – both frantic and listless.

The next day my interview confirmed a judgment I have had since 1980: English groups no longer have anything to say. This wasn't true during punk, when the musicians' ideas and attitudes were usually more interesting than the music itself. But now, read through this week's music press and try to find one startling thought. You'll discover that groups today don't have ideas: they have *concepts* instead.

These concepts are based on a simple mix-and-match principle. Let's mix Frank Sinatra, Bryan Ferry and James Brown (ABC). Let's mix Irish folk music and Northern soul (Dexy's Midnight Runners). Coronation Street and Brenda Lee (Mari Wilson). Let's read *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* and mix 'tribalism' with funk (Pigbag). And jazz (Rip Rig and Panic).

All of them have made good records, so what does it matter what nonsense they talk, or what the concept is? It matters because the concept is what markets the record. It fills the pages of the weekly music papers and defines the packaging. Essential reading here is a very astute article in the January issue of *The Face:* 'The Age of Plunder' by Jon Savage.

This pinpoints the twin characteristics of the present era as being style over content (record sleeves more important than the records inside) and pop's recycling of its own past. 'As elsewhere, 1982 has been the year of the unbridled nostalgia fetish: consumers are now trained . . . to spot the references and make this spotting *part of their enjoyment.*'

Meanwhile the clubs have been housing innumerable youth cult revivals: mods, skinheads, rockabilly, glam rock, psychedelia and now the gloomy threat of progressive rock. The most interesting thing about these revivals is that they have got it all wrong. The psychedelic revival was focused on early Carnaby Street and early Swinging London. However, if you visited the psychedelic stall in Kensington Market last year, you entered an incense-laden cavern which sold remakes of 1965 Mary Quant in Haight-Ashbury Day Glo fluorescent colours. 'Make Love Not War' was spray-painted across the walls – presumably referring to Suez.

They mean to get it right. The difference between a revival and a concept is that a revival is sincere. The mods of today – and there are thousands of them, hidden in scooter clubs and ignored by the press – have seen *Quadrophenia* and want it to be *like that.* A concept revels in dislocation, in playing contradictory styles and attitudes against each other. The revivalists get things wrong by mistake, the conceptualists for effect. However, right now the two are working in tandem to divorce past styles from their context. And, as Savage points out, do this and the past becomes meaningless, reduced to graphic design until 'the lessons which it can teach us are thought trivial, are ignored amongst a pile of garbage'.

The total effect is one of glorious activity, for British pop music has never been so diverse. However, no one style can take root. The last discernible movement was the great British pop revival, circa 1982. It sounded like such a good idea, especially as the 'alternative' network had turned into a dreary, self-absorbed avante-garde ghetto. Back to pleasure, to innocence, to lyrics you could understand, to popular appeal. I thought – a new pop era, just like in the mid-Sixties, my favourite time. What I didn't realize was that it would not be some joyful dance into the future, but an attempt to reproduce the mid-Sixties, to go back in time.

THE PAPERS began raving about a new era of froth and sparkle and pop charm. Haircut 100, at least, delivered the goods. And yet there was something wrong with the neatness of it all. The new pop groups arrived not only with an image, but an analysis, a list of influences and their place in history worked out. In place of innocence we got self-conscious charm. The fashionable label (for a while) was Postcard Records in Scotland. They adopted a motto, 'the sound of Young Scotland', and an image that suggested we were about to be invaded by hordes of fresh-faced, insouciant young Scots scattering bluebells and heather in their wake.

We were. It was nauseating. (I hated *Gregory's Girl,* too.) The most instructive case was that of Altered Images, whose singer, Claire Grogan, even appeared in *Gregory's Girl.* The group's name is very knowing, very post-punk, very self-referential. The image was all lisping innocence; Claire dressed in children's frocks and sang like Shirley Temple. And of course the record

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sleeves, *faux-naif* versions of children's paintings, were gorgeous.

Everyone was trying too hard. There were many Sixties parallels: the regeneration of *Top of the Pops*, the importance of pop singles and the Top Thirty, the boom in teenage magazines, in teenage fashion (rah-rah skirts for mini skirts), the return of the manager and the producer as the most important figures in music.

Everything but the Sixties themselves, which were for all their delusions a time of new money, considerable hope, an impression at least of social egalitarianism, and a good time for teenagers. None of which exactly applies to today. Pop music has ceased to have any connection with its own time: hence the anxiety and rootlessness.

Revivals never work except as style but we put our hearts into them now, because it's painful to look ahead. All this has been said before; the effects of this pop revival were predicted by Peter York in *Style Wars*. It's worth looking, however, at the role of the music industry in all this.

JUST before I left Edinburgh I went to see Bob Last, who is *the* 1980s pop entrepreneur. He manages the Human League (let's make a literate, electronic Abba!) and presides over a labyrinth of holding companies; his partner Rob Warr manages ABC. Last started with punk and sums up the present era the way Malcolm McLaren and Bernie Rhodes summed up 1977 and Tony Wilson of Factory Records summed up 1979.

Like these predecessors, Last combines old-fashioned hustling with a cultural overview. (In the past managers blinded you with sales talk, now they numb you with theories.) Last was instrumental in developing a theory of radical marketing, shared by the other post-punk entrepreneurs. Put simply a record is not an art object but a consumer item manufactured for a mass market. Rather than ignore that process of manufacture, distribution and marketing as something alien to the product, recognise that it is an intrinsic part of that product's effect. Use it creatively *and* subversively, because by doing so you reveal the process to the consumer.

That's valid. However, as Last admits, the final result was . . . more stylish marketing. 'Any radical implications have been diverted into record companies being very aware of packaging and doing 12-inch picture discs.' Everyone's into concepts now.

Of the great pop revival he said:

> The music business isn't going anywhere because society isn't going anywhere. There's no convincing dynamic within society; it's obviously in the process of some kind of collapse. And because the conventional music business is whole-heartedly committed to the status quo – on all levels – all it can do is repeatedly and hysterically assert how great everything is. The more it collapses, the more it diverges from reality, the more sophisticated its distractions need to be. Now even completely meaningless music is dressed up in a mass of artful reference. A real Sixties group would appear incredibly naive today.

He's quite right – it would never sell. □

MUSIC
Andrew Clements

Alien

The Queen of Spades
Coliseum
Tchaikovsky: The Crisis Years 1874-1878
DAVID BROWN *Gollancz* £17.50

Wedged between the fifth and sixth symphonies, *The Queen of Spades* is the last of Tchaikovsky's large-scale operas. On the back of the popular success of its premiere, he produced a one-acter *Iolanta* (as well as *The Nutcracker*) but never again did he attempt anything as ambitious. Though it has always taken second place in the repertory to *Eugene Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades* is arguably the most ambitious of all Tchaikovsky's stage works, the most psychologically complex, and the scenario in which he must have found most parallels with his own predicament. Tatyana is the greatest and most sympathetic of his opera characters, but Hermann in this work offers the greater challenge to interpreters.

If the ENO staging, a David Pountney production first seen at the Netherlands Opera last year, does nothing else, it will remind us how much first-rate music there is in the score; for all the dramatic problems it presents, there are plenty of passages that stand comparison with the best of the symphonies, or *Manfred* or *Onegin*. The 'problem' at the root of any production of *The Queen* is how to deal with the elemental contrasts that are the essence of the libretto with which Modest Tchaikovsky fleshed out Pushkin's original story. Hermann is isolated among the *bonhomie* of his fellow officers, an outsider because of his class and poverty, his Byronic sensibility. He cannot gamble because he lacks the resources, he cannot court the girl he loves because of his social status. It's a theme that Tchaikovsky warmed to, and in his music there is a vivid contrast between the richly expressive music that Hermann sings and the rococo splendour of the set pieces, and between the public world of the barrack scenes and ballroom and the private intensities of the Countess's bedroom.

One cannot accuse David Pountney of missing the point of *The Queen of Spades;* he has simply taken the point too far. Locations are dissolved into anonymous, encircling worlds enclosed by billowing, unsightly net curtains; Hermann becomes a prisoner of his own obsessions and all events are made to fit this conception. Consequently the Intermezzo at the beginning of the second act – Tchaikovsky indulging his love of the rococo most extravagantly – is uncomfortably staged with every attempt made to draw Hermann into it; the beginning of the opera and its chorus of boy soldiers is turned into a nightmare of paranoia.

The approach could have worked had the ENO come up with a suitably larger-than-life singer to carry the main role. But Graham Clark can offer only tortured, melodramatic gestures; there is nothing in his manner or his uningratiating tone to find sympathy or credibility. This Hermann is one of life's victims, without any of the fascination that a thorough study of obsession can provide. The remainder of the cast is rather better. Sarah Walker's Countess, the Queen of Spades herself, is superb; Marie Slorach's Lisa and the Count Tomsky of Alan Opie are the pick of the rest. But it is the playing of the ENO Orchestra that makes the evening a success, though Mark Elder drives some of the score hard, the choruses especially, and occasionally lost impetus in the second act. Once again, I fear, it is an opera at the Coliseum that is best appreciated with eyes closed.

The Queen of Spades is still 15 years in the future as far as David Brown's projected four-volume study of Tchaikovsky is concerned. Brown's second instalment focuses on four years, the most crucial in the composer's life, defined by the third symphony and the violin concerto in musical terms, and taking in the fourth symphony and *Eugene Onegin*. Brown has been able to use an edition of Tchaikovsky's letters previously unpublished in the West, withdrawn before distribution in the Soviet Union in 1940 and containing many confessional passages that were subsequently deleted. They make harrowing, sometimes incredible reading, as the composer moved self-destructively towards his marriage in 1877 to Antonina Milyukova which culminated in his flight from Moscow and nervous breakdown. The pressures that drove him seem pitifully self-induced: 'I am thinking only of eradicating from myself my pernicious passions', he wrote to his brother Modest in September 1876, and within a year he was married to a woman he had known for only two months and whose physical presence he found repulsive. Dr Brown relates all this with great insight and scholarship, as he does the relationship with Nadezhda Von Meck, the patroness with whom Tchaikovsky corresponded most frankly for the rest of his life and whom he never met.

Perhaps most remarkable of all is that throughout this emotional upheaval and collapse, Tchaikovsky was writing two of his greatest works. Brown is unstinting in his praise for the first three movements of the fourth symphony, harsh on the simplicities of its finale, revealing and satisfying in his close study of *Onegin*. Throughout this volume, as in its predecessor, musical analysis goes hand in hand with biographical information; the two aspects of the study are perfectly dovetailed. Already it has become the standard work in English, and one looks forward to the revelations to come in future volumes, especially those surrounding Tchaikovsky's death, which Brown has already partially revealed in his article for the *New Grove*.

In the meantime this biography's achievement has been to present all the facts, prodigiously marshalled, without a trace of melodrama or prurience. □

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TELEVISION
William Boyd

Cuts

THIS IS a review of a programme that none of you had the chance to see. The account of its disappearance from the schedules provides a curious and unsettling tale. On Monday night **Whatever You Want** (Channel 4) consisted of a rock promo film. The edgy front-man, reading from a scrap of paper, alluded to the existence of another film about trade unions which we were not going to see. There was no explanation forthcoming as to why it was being denied us.

The film in question was, broadly, to do with the ambivalent attitude of the TUC to the growing army of unemployed. Created as a result of *WYW*'s access policy, it was the brainchild of a young NUPE shop steward from Inverness called Mike Sabin. The first half of the film centred on a conversation between one Chris Moore (skinhead, rock musician and political writer for the *New Musical Express*) and a retired miner called Joe Kenyon. They debated the question of unionising the unemployed. The second half of the film looked at one branch of the T&GWU, in Liverpool, which is trying to involve the unemployed in its activities. Union officials were interviewed, and the beneficial results of their programme were outlined.

However, for some reason this film was deemed too controversial for C4. Three substantial cuts were demanded that would have reduced the 18-minute film by one-third. The director of the access slot, Jon Sanders, the participants and *WYW*'s presenter – Keith Allen – refused to let the film go out in this truncated form.

On Monday morning a screening of the union film was arranged for journalists. Even the most partisan Tory would have had to admit that it was unexceptionable. Nothing in the film was inflammatory or ranting. The opinions in it were clearly deeply felt and convincingly voiced. But, more to the point, far more extravagant condemnations of present government policy can be heard on TV on almost any night of the week. So what was wrong?

The six-minutes' worth of cuts demanded came in three portions. In the first Moore and Kenyon observed that Thatcher was taking on – and beating – the unions individually. Kenyon drew a familiar analogy with a man trying to break a bunch of sticks. He can't do it when the sticks are bunched; he can only break them one by one. Moore observed that Thatcher had managed to unite her class.

The second cut asked for contained a prediction of social unrest if something wasn't done about the unemployed, a critique of TUC apathy and an exhortation to the same body to pull its finger out. The final cut came in the coda to Sabin's film of the T&G branch in Liverpool. Here Kenyon told an anecdote about a punk girl he'd seen getting on a bus. The passengers' laughter at the girl's hairstyle showed an ignorance of why she dressed like that: she was telling society to stuff it, he averred.

It's hard, if not impossible, to comprehend the objections that could be raised to this typical access film, apart from the significant fact that the cuts all contained derogatory references to the Tory government and Mrs Thatcher. None of the observations or comments was either staggeringly original, intolerably idiosyncratic or lunatic Left hell-raising. So why were the cuts demanded? Is someone running scared? Paranoia? There seems absolutely no point in having access programmes – where minority opinions are expressly solicited – if that 'access' is so illogically conditioned. Someone, somewhere, owes us an explanation.

As a footnote to the whole sad business Keith Allen has decided to quit *Whatever You Want*. His was a vital and energetic presence in the show; so a very promising and original C4 enterprise has been nipped disastrously in the bud. □

THEATRE
Benedict Nightingale

Spit and wax

Ubu
ALFRED JARRY *Warehouse*
Messiah
PATRICK BARLOW *Tricycle*
Yakety Yak
ROBERT WALKER *Astoria*

Cyril Connolly, whose translation is the basis of the adaptation of Jarry now at the Warehouse, dubbed Père Ubu 'the Santa Claus of the atomic age': a phrase not, however, quite sufficient to sum up the character's spectacular crudity, avarice and gleeful brutality. Better call him the Grimaldi of mass murder, the vaudeville king of Armageddon. With a cheery cry of 'I'll make my fortune, I'll kill everybody in the world, then I'll go away', he proceeds to assassinate the Polish king, slaughter the nobles and ministers, rob rich and poor alike and, having plunged his nation into a calamitous war with Russia, slam off to Jarry's France, where he hopes to be appointed 'master of finances'. It's a sly dig, this last, and perhaps a significant one, since it emphasises the extent to which Ubu represents the oafish French peasantry and corrupt French bourgeoisie. The play is a satiric assault on all styles of power, not excluding the 'democratic'.

But the Actors Touring Company can't altogether accept this. It makes several changes to the text, some forced on it by want of personnel and money, some not. It is a pity that Ubu's 'disembraining machine' is no more than a spoof electric screwdriver, and its victims very, very few; but one sees why. It's a pity that the lavatory-brush the burlesque monarch commonly uses as sceptre is introduced only once, to spray the audience from a pisspot; and that isn't so easily explained. But the most worrying changes are, first, the replacing of the murdered king's uninteresting son with a daughter of ringingly republican views and, second, showing the Russians rejecting her claims to the throne in favour of a reliable stooge. The crushing of Solidarity is clearly somewhere in the mind of the director, John Retallack; but, given the all-engulfing cynicism of Jarry himself, his well-meant evocation seems intrusive, awkward, anomalous in style and mood.

Yet the revival as a whole is more baleful in spirit, as well as more visually resourceful, than English productions usually are. For instance, four performers manage, in the clangour and half-light, to make the Russian army both plausible and surprisingly sinister. Again, even if their acting sometimes drifts into a samey blend of roar, snarl and spit, there are splendidly energetic performances from the gruesome Ubus themselves: Susan Colverd, a raucous frump, hawking, snorting and slavering from beneath a wig of foaming vermillion; Chris Barnes, a tiny dark figure with specs, a big orange nose and a puffed-up belly, an amalgam of Groucho Marx, Wackford Squeers and Lord George-Brown, spewing, scratching, playing games with his earwax, vaguely masturbating, and generally making himself obscene, both physically and morally. By and large, it's an auspicious opening to the ATC's coming season at the Warehouse.

Messiah is the latest piece of mock-heroic to emerge from the National Theatre of Brent, which consists of two downbeat young actors, each of whom seems to be doing an imitation of Tommy Cooper, Tony Hancock, or both, and a dumpy, zonked-looking singer known as Mrs T. The characters include a harassed Joseph and a nagging Mary – 'you should get out more and go to the pictures,' he advises her in his best Railway Cuttings voice – as well as an angel-obsessed shepherd who has the ill-fortune to be counting the sheep when Gabriel comes to proclaim the good news. Add much calculated incompetence onstage, and a dubiously relevant parody of the Edinburgh tattoo, and you've something which is meant to bear the same relation to Handel as half a kipper to Moby Dick; and certainly succeeds in that aim. It is harmless and even diverting at times, but pretty predictable, and hence a bit boring.

But its tedium and predictability are as nothing beside that of **Yakety Yak,** which reopens the Astoria as a cafe-theatre: meaning that you sit at cosy little tables and sip the drinks the cast is driving you to. Possibly I'm not the best person to appreciate the show, since I'm not a nostalgia-freak, least of all for the glum Fifties, and haven't much of an ear for period rock; but I can't believe anyone would be beguiled by the ropey tale of boy-loses-then-gets-girl that links the caterwaulings. □

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FILMS
John Coleman

Acting up

An Officer and a Gentleman (15)
Empire
Privates on Parade (15)
Classic, Haymarket; ABC, Fulham Road
The Writing on the Wall
ICA

An unfeeling tough guy and loner enlists for naval officer candidate school and, during 13 weeks of physically and psychologically ransacking training, emerges a better, more caring man thanks to the treatment handed out by a no-shit black drill sergeant and the love lavished by a goodish girl. The story-line could be accommodated on one side of a wooden nickel. And yet **An Officer and a Gentleman** has been coining umpteen million real dollars in the US since it opened there last summer. How should we start to reckon with this phenomenon? Well, let me count the ways. Looming large, I suspect, is that universal admiration for a winner (as the bruised and macho loner proves to be) which our American cousins carry to greater heights – and lower depths – than any other nation. And Zack Mayo (Richard Gere) has that *Rocky* plus of coming from nowhere much in the first place. Then there are the vivid sado-masochistic pleasures to be garnered from the brute details of training, varied and gruelling torments endured on our behalf. Nicely balanced against this, for the liberal conscience, there is a tale in which black jostles white without the slightest hint of racial strain on either side. And there is a sentimental double-header of a happy ending, with even the women-workers on screen applauding, to send everyone home in a rosy glow. Douglas Day Stewart's screenplay, clichés and all, is pretty shrewd stuff.

Zack's ma killed herself when he was 13, leaving him to the tender mercies of a Philippine whorehouse upbringing under the mostly absentee tutelage of a drunken sailor dad. The film begins with grown Zack, watching dad puke after a shared binge and recalling this adolescence in an orange-filtered flashback. From there on, and a shaky start it is, Taylor Hackford (only previous feature, *The Idolmaker*) directs with a sure hand; and what he is most clearly seen to direct is his actors. It is the performances that lift the film, if not to the peaks of art, at least well out of its apparently predestined rut.

Gere has been useful in *Yanks* and *American Gigolo*. Here he rises persuasively to Zack's stoic and caddish occasions, takes them quite in his mean stride; more, he almost manages the slick pathos of a moment's crack-up. 'I got nowhere else to go,' he reiterates to the hard black fellow urging him to drop out. 'I got nothing else.' And, as that driving sergeant, Louis Gossett Jr has *his* act – with its own reefs of sentiment to founder on – bleakly together. But the women make the crucial impact. The would-be officers are early warned about 'Puget debs', local small-town girls who willingly give their all to trap uniformed husbands and escape. Lisa Blount finely plays the brittle blonde one who screws up Zack's pal through a pretend-pregnancy, but it is to Debra Winger as Paula, her friend at the paper-bag workroom, that the palm should go. Her scenes with Gere/Zack are, by turn, tender, funny, incredibly erotic and credibly tremulous. No excuses for singling her out: she roots the enterprise to a pleasant sort of reality, redeems whole stretches of it from routine. In the same bill is a 33-minute British short, **The Rocking Horse Winner,** flatly directed by Robert Bierman. Drawn without regard for pace or momentum from an uncharacteristic D. H. Lawrence short story, it does nothing to dislodge from the memory Anthony Pelissier's far more imaginative 1949 feature-length version of the tale.

Michael Blakemore did Peter Nichols's **Privates on Parade** for the RSC; now he and Nichols have got together again for a film version of this fairly flagrant comedy-with-a-sob-or-two, turning on the fortunes of a group of soldier entertainers, Far East, late Forties. I could wish away the 'serious' bits: an inexplicably evil sergeant-major (Michael Elphick), who flogs weapons to the enemy and leads the camp party into a bloody contretemps; and some kowtowing to the current nervousness about homosexual sensibilities, which has a nice little man-lover in the troupe remonstrating with the hugely camp Acting Captain Terri (Denis Quilley) over his ceaseless stream of double entendres. Elsewhere, where Quilley is given his pouting, naughty head in an act that only the massively insecure could find offensive, much is outrageously funny in an old-fashioned way. This Terri swishes about, feminising all names (his king is 'Georgina VI' and he invokes 'Jessica Christ' when fraught) and doing awful on-stage impersonations of Carmen Miranda, Dietrich and Vera Lynn. The new place where seriousness is made to count to marvellous effect is, of course, in John Cleese's poker-faced mad-Christian Major Flack, blissfully unaware of practically everything that's happening around him. Joe Melia plays a sergeant who would be struck dumb if deprived of our commonest swear-word; Cleese's matey sense of how the chaps talk emerges in frequent cheer-up addresses: 'Lord love a duck' and the like. Mr Blakemore films the piece up with a move into black-and-white for a mock Fred-and-Ginger dance routine and some fake Movietone newsreels.

For a thoroughly grave, not to say incurably pretentious visit to the cinema there is Armand Gatti's **The Writing on the Wall,** the manipulation of a mixed Catholic and Protestant youth group, the Londonderry Workshop in Northern Ireland, in an unpursuable and phoney 'docu-drama' around the death of a British soldier. □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2755 **Set by B. Mooring**

Versified Valentines, please, from Denis to Maggie, Di to Chas, Ronnie to Nancy, Margaret Drabble to Michael Holroyd or Beatrice to Sidney Webb (or *vice versa*, of course). Eight lines max., by 11 February.

No 2752 **Set by C. Fever**

'In the room the women come and go,/Talking of Michelangelo.' We asked for that conversation.

Report **By Jeff Squiffy**

And we got it, dropping as the gentle rain from heaven. The post-bag bulged with ingenious concoctions – restaurants called Michelangelo, hairdressers called Michelangelo and our old film-directing chum Michelangelo Antonioni (well done, B. Ransome-Davies). None of you remembered that in the summer of 1975 a streaker called Michael Angelow was arrested for dashing on to the wicket at Lord's. A variegated and creditable effort nevertheless; ten apiece.

Scene: The Sistine Chapel, in high summer.
. . . Holy Mother of God, wouldn't you think the man had no shame at all . . .
. . . I'm a buttocks girl myself . . . mmm, buttocks and thighs . . . His thighs are so, you know, *sturdy* . . .
. . . Christ, Bruce, it's bloody massive! . . .
. . . Gee, it's kinda awe-inspiring . . . You tellin' me this guy was an *Italian*? Are you *sure*? . . .
. . . Look at that cherub, darling – isn't it just the image of Mr Glossop, the bank manager? . . .
. . . But Sister Kathleen, this is not the work of a God fearin' man, now is it? . . .
. . . He wasn't! *Really*? God, I thought all these renaissance blokes were, you know, really virile.
. . . The poor bastard must've got a bloody stiff neck, though . . .
. . . Is he the same guy that cut off his ear? . . .
. . . I think we've absorbed enough culture for one day, don't you, darling? PETER NORMAN

'*David* is so wonderful, proportioned so ideally,
So male! a figure of such magnificence.'
'And yet . . . one wonders whether . . . there is not a sense . . .'
The sentence trails into silence,
Like vapour behind an aero-plane, fattens into nothing.
'Oh quite! One can admire, yet it seems to me
That even poor Prufrock, sitting over there
And balancing his teacup on his knee,
With a bald spot in the middle of his hair
Has more . . .' Again the question is left in air:
'I know not what.'
'Ah, but the Sistine ceiling, darling,
That's a different matter, such vision; and re-vision,
Such perspective! and *years*
Up on that dreary scaffold. Yet one hears
That he, that Michelangelo, was practically a dwarf.'
'Then perhaps,' (she doffs a shawl and speaks behind
A soft and supple hand),
'There's hope for little Prufrock yet.' Their laughter
Tinkles like the chinaware. GERARD BENSON

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'I am as pained as I am surprised, Prism, that you should have seen fit to acquaint the all too impressionable young gels entrusted to your tutelage with these inflammatory illustrations.'

'But, Lady Bracknell – Michelangelo – one of the greatest figures of the Renaissance!'

'A greatly overrated event in my opinion. I, too, have visited the Sistine Chapel – it was on my honeymoon – though that is not my only reason for disliking the place intensely. Signor Buonarotti's concentration on what I can perhaps most delicately designate as the insignia of manhood may well generate expectations in your charges that the realities of marriage may only too rapidly, alas, disappoint.'

'But what could be more edifying than his depiction of the Day of Judgment?'

'An occasion that will probably clash with the Royal Academy's Private View and could well – even more unpardonably – coincide with Gold Cup day at Ascot.' MARTIN FAGG

A party from Georgia enters the powder-room.

'Shucks – Ah thought Michelangelo was an Italian pianist!'

'Nope – you'se thinking of Paganini, honey.'

'In Atlanta we've an ice-cream parlour called Michelangelo's. Do you suppose . . .'

'I don't! Why, Michelangelo was busy painting the dome of St Paul's, London, England, when Atlanta was a coffee-stain on a realtor's map!'

Party from Georgia leaves, and ditto from Maine enters.

'Well, I liked his Last Supper best!'

'Da Vinci's, to be precise!'

'Who cares – Davincis or salami – I liked it!'

'His statue of David's a wow!'

'Yep – but portraying a Jewish king, he should have chosen a Jewish boy for his model.'

'So?'

'He didn't . . . Haven't you noticed?'

'Well I'm durned!'

'Still, I'm sure the Rabbi could soon fix that with a fine-chisel and a light-hammer!'

PASCOE POLGLAZE

paint paint paint that's all he ever does I mean huge pink bottoms plastered all over the ceiling well it's not nice is it I mean I said to him Tuesday morning I said God knows you've got enough brushes I said how about giving the kitchen a decent coat of whitewash fine he said fine won't take a jiffy so I went back dinner-time what did I find I found some huge great feller right above the sink with no clothes and yes a Thing yes well I mean would you like to look at somebody's Thing when you're trying to get on with your sprouts and now he's doing statues too I mean bits of marble everywhere and last week the Blessed Virgin fell right through the bedroom floor I said why can't you get a proper job like and work for the customs like your dad? RICHARD PARLOUR

Scene: Filling line at a coffee factory.

'Michelangelo a feminist? You must be joking.'

'Have you seen those figures in San Lorenzo? I mean, they're tremendous!'

'Of course they're tremendous. They've probably just collapsed from some rugby scrum. That doesn't make him a bloody feminist.'

'But it's his refusal to see women as "pretty". He allows them to be relaxed, right?'

'You'd be relaxed if you were that size, with breasts like curling stones. No one's giving them any bother, are they?'

'I don't believe what you're giving me! Surely you're not a Botticelli person?'

'And what's wrong with Botticelli?'

'Come on! All those Quattrocento bunny girls!'

'Granted they're never going to putt the shot for Russia, but – Hey! How much bloody coffee are you putting in those jars?' JAN RUT-BROWN

FIRST PERSON

Corinna Adam

Woman's best friend

MY MOTHER had a housekeeper, Mrs Evans, with whom she shared a sarcastic attitude towards the neighbours and – we thought as children – an irreverent one towards ourselves. We never saw the sisterly love I later learned there was between them. Only my mother knew, when Mrs Evans disappeared in the middle of the night (apparently so as to avoid ending up in the river like the first Mrs Evans, Mr Evans being known to have a nasty temper) – only my mother was sure that she had gone for good.

That morning, next to her typewriter, my mother had found her treadle sewing machine with (this was the vital clue) all the spare shuttles re-threaded in black, white, brown and blue. It was the best leaving present Mrs Evans could have made – a worthy gesture. It was a token, and meant as an object lesson too.

Mrs Evans respected my mother's writing, as she did all work. But she had no particular admiration for the machine it was done on, no more than for a lawnmower or a gas-cooker, as something to achieve a necessary job more efficiently. She did think, though, that my mother ought to have exchanged my grandmother's 1920s Singer (hand-operated) for a more restful treadle machine. Mrs Evans frequently pointed out the advantages, firmly during tea-cup gossip. Any woman with a sewing-machine (she said) was truly independent of men.

Sewing-machines have always had a bad press in the women's movement, perhaps because of sewing itself. The weary half-blind seamstresses of the Victorian age have their great-grand-daughters in sweatshops from Stepney to Hong Kong. The industrial sewing-machine, and its associated piecework, can be made funny by a clever actress like Miriam Karlin (just as Ronnie Barker can make prison funny). But the grubby feel of slavery can never be quite rubbed out. So there is a theory that, like the typewriter, the sewing-machine is a man-made invention to keep women properly submissive.

Certainly the men who invented both (for the record, it wasn't Mr Isaac Singer who first patented the idea of a machine to do lockstitch, but a Mr Elias Howe of Massachusetts, and I can imagine him) had no other view than a quick and preferably lasting buck. The sewing-machine has no place in the annals of emancipation, alongside the typewriter. George Gissing's feminist heroine Rhoda starts a typewriting school to make herself independent. In Barrie's play *The Twelve-Pound Look* Lady Sims gazes enviously at the girl who carries her typewriter 'in a friendly way, rather than as a badge of servitude'. The typewriter has become a badge of servitude, all right.

There is an odd kind of snobbery here. A woman colleague I otherwise respect advised my daughters not to learn to type because they will 'never get anywhere' if they do. Of course many a girl has lost her chances by believing false promises. ('Only a few more months, sweetie, and you will be a salesperson/journalist/model.')

The snobbery about sewing machines is deeper, though, and has more to do with class than sex. In the prideful intellectual life of the 1930s no woman who hoped to be appreciated for her wits made her own dresses. I have never believed that any self-proclaimed Virginia or Beatrice did anything but crossly pin up a hem on the maid's day off. They may have thought they were creating their sweeping romantic ideas (though they would never have admitted to knowing about Scarlett O'Hara and the velvet curtains) but did they run them up? The hell they did. For all their freedom, they accepted the male fantasy about the fair head bent over embroidery. And let the others sew the less than fine seam.

Which is what sewing-machines do, only more finely and more neatly and more quickly. Their ironic virtue is that they do what any good girl would have been expected to do, what any upper-class miss knew a bit about, what any princess did waiting in the garden for her lover, quickly and with a sort of dancing precision.

It may be this fantasy aspect of sewing that makes men keep their distance. No man (and I know this, if you were asking, from the British Sewing Council) pretends to understand a sewing-machine: it is the one consumer good which they might buy but carefully arrange not to be involved in. They keep their distance.

That distance inadvertently put the sewing-machine into its place as one of women's mysteries: the knowledge and the means being handed down in zig-zag stitches. My own mother's machine is long gone; the one I have from a cousin in the States broke down over Christmas; so my sister-in-law made my daughter's Christmas present on *her* machine, while my younger daughter told her best friend that you can bypass one of those annoying little threading holes by adjusting the tension. The best friend's machine had belonged to her stepmother. If you get my meaning.

But then, unless you are half of the readership, why should you? □

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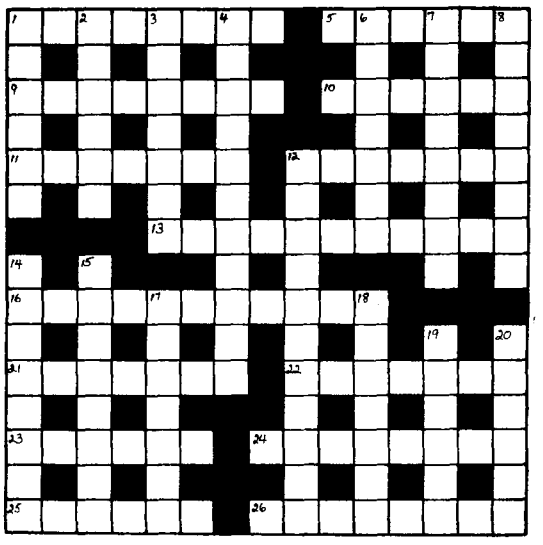

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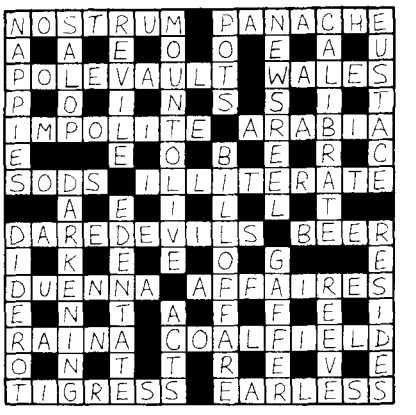
ACROSS

1. A new life and a place to live in brings happiness. (8)
5. It is a blow, but if one loses everything the foreigner survives. (6)
9. Minor entertainment shows teams the way. (8)
10. Commotion caused by allowing an animal on a vehicle. (6)
11. Taking average time. (7)
12. Give old man one sign of wedlock when mating. (7)
13. Where the priest is becoming corrupt? (11)
16. Amazing playwright found among the living. (11)
21. Sprinkles among a hundred gesticulating people. (7)
22. Own only about a shilling but flourish. (7)
23. Medicine for sick seamen. (6)
24. Ancient heroine opposed to the past. (8)
25. Summer and not quite fall. (6)
26. Lily makes excited lads hope. (8)

DOWN

1. Nurse or doctor. (6)
2. Left with a serpent – it has scales (6)
3. Sack someone who takes money. (7)
4. Even if a woman is about fifty, it is inconsiderate. (11)
6. It is funny when a fool is about to do the wrong thing. (7)
7. Small room seen in the French windows. (8)
8. Father has gone crazy as an operatic character. (8)
12. Ruler of old land power longs for islands. (11)
14. One is in a depression after an order to be dutiful. (8)
15. The most charming get a second with a brief examination. (8)
17. Pull fruit for something to take on holiday. (7)
18. 'Rather fine!' is the exclamation about a girl with nothing on. (7)
19. Support the hot in a mixture of soft and loud. (6)
20. George puts the alternative nicely. (6)

Solution to 1387



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Applicants should have an interest in, and an understanding of, industrial and economic policy issues. An Honours Degree, though not essential, would be an advantage. Duties will include the preparation of papers on a wide range of industrial policy issues, including industrial planning, public enterprise, multinationals, science and technology, regional policy and workers' co-operatives, and it will involve a good understanding of applied economics. The successful candidate will also service the appropriate policy advisory committees and working groups of the National Executive Committee; and will help to provide background information to all sections of the Party.

Applicants must be members of the Labour Party, and a background of activity in the Party and the wider Labour movement would be of considerable advantage.

Application forms and conditions of employment can be obtained from:

The Administrative and Personnel Officer, The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT, and the closing date is Monday, 14 February, 1983.

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If you are interested please write, quoting reference S.I., to:
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Closing date 15 February 1983

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Publications

MIDDLE EAST catalogues available. A. C. Hall, 30 Staines Road, Twickenham TW2 5AH.

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INLAND REVENUE STAFF FEDERATION

GENERAL TREASURER DESIGNATE

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Starting salary by negotiation within the scale **£10,891** to **£17,168** inclusive of London Weighting. Non-contributory pension. Thirty days leave.

There is no application form, though fuller particulars of the responsibilities of the post are available on request.

Applications (which should be type-written and of which four copies should be supplied, please) from those with experience of, or sympathy for, Trade Unions, should be sent to:

Tony Christopher, General Secretary, INLAND REVENUE STAFF FEDERATION, Douglas Houghton House, 231 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EH. Telephone 01-834 8254, in envelopes marked 'Application. Private'.

Closing date for applications: Friday 11 February, 1983.

NEGOTIATIONS OFFICER

The Society of Civil and Public Servants, the Trade Union representing 100,000 Executive Grades in the Civil Service and Public Bodies invite applications for the post of Negotiations Officer.

Experience in Civil Service or Public Sector Trade Union activity and of the Civil Service Whitley Council Machinery is desirable. Ability to communicate effectively is essential.

The salary scale is **£9,538** to **£10,978** including **£1,220** Inner London Weighting. Annual Leave entitlement is thirty days and there is a non-contributory pension scheme. Retirement is compulsory at age 60.

Applications for the post should be sent to: **The General Secretary, Society of Civil and Public Servants, 124/130 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TU** to arrive by 11 February 1983, enclosing full CV including details of Education, Employment and Trade Union Experience. Applicants should give a daytime telephone number for contact purposes. Interviews for short listed candidates will take place on **22 February 1983.**

society
of civil & public servants

LISTINGS

FRI 28 JAN

LONDON SE1 GLC Women's Committee open meeting. Discn on public transport. Open to all women. 7pm County Hall. **01-633 1038**

LONDON W6 Poland in 1983. Discn led by Tim Garton Ash. 7.30pm Polish Centre, 238 King St, London W6. Org Polish Solidarity Campaign **01-567 4427**

HOMERTON Benefit for Troops Out Movement. Irish folk and African highlife music. Bar. 8.30pm Chat's Palace, Brooksby's Walk, London E9

LONDON WC1 Josephine Butler – courage and compassion. Spkr Joyce Ansell. 7.30pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Coffee 6.30pm. Org The Shaw Society

BATH 28-30 Jan. Campaign skill-sharing weekend. Sessions on non-violent direct action; public speaking, campaign against cruise. £9. Chappie **0225 26948**

LONDON WC1 28-29 Jan. Conference on Economic Planning and Socialism. Fri 7.30pm 'Is democratic planning possible?' Audrey Wise, Tom Sawyer. Sat 9.30 Workshops on capitalist planning, Soviet-type planning, labour movement initiatives. Architectural Assn, 34-36 Bedford Sq. Sponsored by CSE, New Socialist, Critique, Socialist Economic Review.

SAT 29 JAN

LONDON Second London Assembly. London organisations discuss London's economy and services. 10-1.30pm, Friends House, Euston Rd. Org GLC

LONDON WC2 Festival of Cuban Culture. 130th anniversary of Jose Marti's birth. Film and talks, afternoon. Live Latin American group eve. Bar. Africa Centre, 38 King St, WC2. Org Britain-Cuba Resource Centre.

LONDON W1 Keeping the Peace. Women's Peace Workshops. 10-6pm Polytechnic of Central London, 115 New Cavendish Street. Women only. Org The Women's Press **01-729 5257**

LONDON W1 Feminism and Psychoanalysis. Aspects of Kleinian Theory. Janet Sayers and Ann Scott. The Roebuck Pub, Tottenham Court Road. Women only. **01-794 6063**

MANCHESTER Greater Manchester and District CND Annual General Meeting. 10am Manchester Town Hall. **Peter Norman 061-445 2196**

LONDON SE1. Racism and schools. Consultative conference. Spkr Farrukh Dhondy Multiculturalism, teacher unions, mother-tongue teaching, Black teachers. 11-4.30 County Hall. Org Communist Party **01-251 4406**

CAMBRIDGE Work for the future: A jobs fair with a difference. Stalls, talks, advice, films etc on agriculture, co-ops, health, job-sharing, environment etc. Creche, access for disabled. 10-5pm Wesley Centre, King St. **Ann Robinson 0223 356454**

LONDON SE1 Improving Council Housing Estates. Working conf on vandalism, neighbours, youth, decentralisation, tenants organisations. Poly of South Bank. Org by Safe Neighbourhoods Unit **01-729 1366**

LEEDS New Tasks for Irish Solidarity. 10-5pm Leeds Trades Club. Org Irish Freedom Movement **01-274 3951**

CARDIFF Lawyers for nuclear disarmament Meeting 10am-1pm. Law building, Museum Avenue. Org Lawyers for Nuclear Disarmament Group. Stephen Parker **0222 44211**

BRISTOL National Childcare Campaign AGM Friends Meeting House, 122 Hampton Road, Redland, Bristol. **0272 542128**

SUN 30 JAN

LEEDS Remember Bloody Sunday. Commemorative demonstration. Org Irish Freedom Movement **01-274 3951**

BIRMINGHAM West Midlands CND AGM. 2pm UCATT, Gough St

LONDON SE1 Women: Immigration and nationality. Open to all women. 2pm County Hall. Org GLC working group. **01-633 1047**

LEICESTER Solitary confinement. Spkr Rob Rohrer. 6.30pm Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Org Leicester Secular Society. **Leics 22250**

LONDON W9 Which Way Forward for the Labour Left? Dayschool, sessions on trade unions, CLPs, a strategy for the Left. Spkrs inc Robin Cook, MP. 10.30am Labour Party Rooms 39 Chippenham Rd. Org Clause 4 publications **0703 39585**

LONDON NW6 Mapam forum on Zionism and the Left. Spkrs incl Harry Davies, Chairman Mapam UK. 8pm 37 Broadhurst Gdns, NW6. Refreshments. Org Mapam.

MON 31 JAN

HACKNEY Peace, Jobs and Freedom. Public mtng with Tony Benn MP, Hilary Wainwright, Patrick Kodikara, Brian Sedgemore. 7.30pm Hackney Town Hall, Mare St. Org Hackney and Shoreditch Labour Party.

LONDON Exploring the Politics of Language. Spkrs Eva Kalusynska (NUJ), Sheila MacLeod (Writers' Guild). 7pm The Globe, opp Baker St station. Women's meeting. Org Women In Media Helen Franks **01-435 7772**

NOTTINGHAM Picket for Khan and Kaur families, 10am DHSS Castle Boulevard. Org Nottingham CARF

ISLINGTON ILEA's spending plans for 1983. Barry Stead, ILEA finance chairman talks to Islington Campaign for the Advancement of State Education. 8pm Islington Town Hall. Org CASE **01-359 0609**

OXFORD Teach-in on new technology, the Oxford experience. Spkrs incl: Roger Sealey, Bernard Rowley, Bill Roche, Pat Phipps. 7.30pm Headington Labour Club, Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford. Org WEA. **Phil Fryer 0865 721277.**

TUES 1 FEB

BATTERSEA Opening of Hollywood Babylon, musical adaptation of Kenneth Anger's notorious book. All shows 8pm Bridge Lane Theatre, London SW11.

LONDON SW1 Academic Inn inaugural dinner John Seymour on The Curse of Agribusiness 6.30pm at Royal Overseas League. Org by Fourth World Trust. **01-226 4366**

THUR 3 FEB

LONDON W8 Douglas Dunn will read from his poetry. 8pm Kensington Bookshop, 140 Church St. Org Pembridge Poets.

LONDON WC2 Zoe Fairbairns reads from new novel, *Stand We At Last* (Virago.) Introduced by Michele Roberts, 7pm Stukely St, Drury Lane

LONDON W1 A European strategy for Labour. Discn introduced by Terry Ward, Cambridge Economic Policy Gp. 7.30 Black Horse, Rathbone Place. Org CSE London forum. **01-226 6400**

FORTHCOMING

4 FEB London Europe Nato and the Bomb. Spkrs incl Fred Halliday, Kate Soper, John Palmer, Pat Arrowsmith. 7.30 Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. Org Socialist Society **01-734 8501**

Stoke Newington British withdrawal from Ireland. Public mtng 7pm Stoke Newington Assembly Rooms, Stoke Newington Church St. Org Troops Out Movement and Labour Conference on Ireland local branches.

5 FEB Glasgow Afghanistan: an eye-witness account. Ron Brown MP. 10.30 McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St. Org Scottish Council of Liberation. **041-339 9390**

London SE1 Afro-Caribbean struggle against imperialism. Conference with Ken Gill, Hilda Bernstein, Cuban Ambassador, Fennis Augustine. 10.30 County Hall. Org Liberation and Britain-Cuba Resource Centre. **01-607 0465**

5-6 FEB London Socialist Society Annual Conference. Spkrs incl Tony Benn, Lynne Segal, Frances Morrell, Hilary Wainwright, Ruth Lister. Plenary sessions, workshops, Members' AGM. Sir William Collins School, Charrington St, NW1. **01-734 8501**

6 FEB Leicester Why is Poland Different? Peter Cadogan. 6.30pm Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. **Leics 22250**

7 FEB Hampstead Peace March and torchlit procession. Leaves Fortune Green police station 7pm. Showing of War Game at St Georges Hall. Org Hampstead Labour Party.

London W1 A World Apart: the culture of nonconformity. Alun Howkins. 7.30 Black Horse, Rathbone Place. Org History Workshop

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad. under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

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Appointments

LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

EMPLOYMENT AND BASIC EDUCATION POST

The London Borough of Hackney, with a legacy of urban deprivation and high unemployment, is actively concerned in a wide range of measures to redress this situation. The Council is in process of expanding its Economic Development Unit currently responsible for developing and implementing job creation and training initiatives within the area.

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To set up and run an Urban Programme funded project to look at job entry criteria working with local employers. Special emphasis to be given to developing training programmes for existing employees where literacy/numeracy difficulties are a barrier to advancement. You will need to be able to demonstrate relevant experience in dealing with employers, unions, placing agencies and local education institutions. The job calls for a wide range of skills and we would be particularly sympathetic to applicants with strengths in personnel or education/training wishing to job share.

You will report to the Employment Promotion Officer and a multi-organisation Steering Group will advise on the progress of the project.

Job sharing facilities are available.

Application forms are available from the Director of Personnel and Secretariat, Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA, or telephone 01-986 7539 (24-hour answering service) quoting reference AG128/NS.

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Fellowship

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Meetings

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Sat. 5 February, from 10.30 a.m.

A one-day seminar

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The Buddhist method of loving-kindness with monks from the Chithurst Community

CAN PEACE BEGIN IN EUROPE? Basil Hembry reports Westminster UNA, St Barnabas Church Hall, Ranelagh Grove (off Pimlico Rd, SW1) Tues. 1 February 7 p.m. on Conference European UNAs from Warsaw and NATO countries, Budapest. All welcome. Discussion.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Sunday 30 Jan. 8 p.m. Informal Q/A Meeting 'Psychic Laws & Phenomena'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON (Gower St, WC1E 6BT). The Freud Memorial Lectures in Psychoanalysis by Madame Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, 5.30, Gustave Tuck Theatre. Mon. 7 Feb. – 'Narcissism and the Psychology of Groups'. Mon. 14 March – 'Aestheticism, Creation and Perversion'.

Beds

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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE, Aldwych. S. CC 01-836 6404/01-379 6233. Group sales 01-379 6061 eves 7.45 (Mats Wed. 3 p.m. from 2 Feb.) Sats 5 & 8.30. Maureen Lipman & Clive Swift in 'MESSIAH'

by Martin Sherman, directed by Ronald Eyre. 'A rare theatrical evening' Sheridan Morley, 'Maureen Lipman . . . one of the most electric actresses on the London stage' City Limits. CC HOT LINE 01-930 9232.

APOLLO VICTORIA. 01-834 6177. Evgs 7.30. Mat. Sat. 2.30. Half-price mat. Tues. 2.30. RICHARD HARRIS in LERNER & LOEWE'S CAMELOT. RICHARD HARRIS 'the performance is a triumph' F. Times. '. . . a five minute standing ovation' N. Standard. CREDIT CARDS: 01-636 8686 (Keith Prowse, no fees). GROUP SALES: 01-379 6061. OAPs & CHILDREN ½ price Mon.-Thur. & Sat. mat. From 10 am Mon.-Thur. Student Standby 100 Tkts £3. LAST WEEKS. MUST END FEB. SAT. 5th.

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ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
'POPPY' (Musical of the Year 1982), book & lyrics Peter Nichols, music Monty Norman – 28/29 Jan., returns 7 March. 'ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL' from 1 Feb. THE PIT – 'THE WITCH OF EDMONTON' by Dekker, Ford & Rowley – to 29 Jan. UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY – a series of playreadings by new writers to the theatre 1-4 Feb.

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE, Gordon Street, WC1. 01-387 9629. 28-29 Jan. 8 p.m. Julian Glover tells the epic tale of 'Beowulf'.

NATIONAL THEATRE. 01-928 2252. Olivier (open stage) 'Danton's Death', 'Guys and Dolls'. Lyttelton (proscenium stage) 'A Map of the World', 'Major Barbara'. Cottesloe (small auditorium) 'The Beggar's Opera', 'Other Places'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE, EC1. 01-278 8916 (5 lines), 24 hour instant booking 01-200 0200. Group sales 01-279 6061 CC.
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